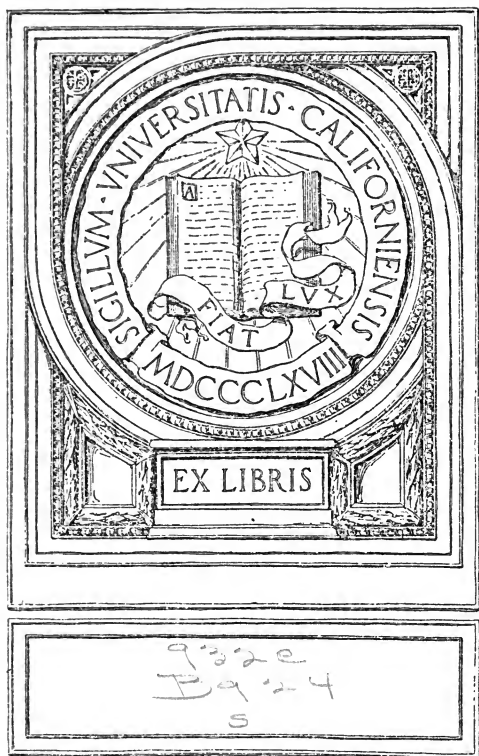


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THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL
AND THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
MOVEMENT



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Photo by D. McNeill, Stratford-upon-Avon

SHAKESPEARE'S TOMB, BENEATH THE BUST AND TABLET TO HIS
MEMORY, IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, AS
GARLANDED WITH FLOWERS ON APRIL 23.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

AND THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
MOVEMENT

BY

REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

WITH CHAPTERS ON FOLK-ART BY MARY NEAL
A FOREWORD BY F. R. BENSON
AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
ARTHUR HUTCHINSON

ILLUSTRATED

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1911

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To Mr. J. M. J.
Anderson.

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TO
THE GOVERNORS
OF THE
SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

THIS BOOK IS
BY PERMISSION DEDICATED
AS A TRIBUTE TO THEIR WORK

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD. BY F. R. BENSON	xi
THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE AT STRAT- FORD-UPON-AVON: A RECORD OF ITS WORK. ARTHUR HUTCHINSON	3

THE NATURE OF DRAMA

BY REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART	43
II. THE ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE	66
III. CONCERNING WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE . .	83
IV. THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE	102
V. A TEMPLE OF DREAMS: A PERSONAL REVERIE	119
VI. WAGNER AND HIS RELATION TO SHAKE- SPEARE	136
VII. CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE . . .	153
VIII. THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART	177

FOLK-ART

BY MARY NEAL

I. THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON FESTIVAL MOVEMENT AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS . .	191
--	-----

CONTENTS

	PAGE
II. THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART—	
I. IN ENGLAND	214
II. THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART AND THE DRAMA IN THE UNITED STATES	224

APPENDIX

HOW TO TAKE PART IN THE MOVEMENT	231
--	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS

SHAKESPEARE'S TOMB, BENEATH THE BUST AND TABLET TO
HIS MEMORY, IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY,
AS GARLANDED WITH FLOWERS ON APRIL 23

Frontispiece

Photo by D. McNeill, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE AT
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON *Facing p. 4*

Photo by A. Tyler, Stratford-upon-Avon

MR. F. R. BENSON AS HENRY V. . . . „ 13

Photo by Chancellor, Dublin

MRS. F. R. BENSON AS CONSTANCE . . . „ 32

Photo by L. Caswall Smith

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS PORTIA . . . „ 49

Photo by Window & Grove

SIR HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE AS HAMLET „ 64

Photo by W. & D. Downey

MISS GENEVIEVE WARD AS VOLUMNIA . . . 81

Photo by L. Caswall Smith

MR. J. FORBES-ROBERTSON AS HAMLET AND
MISS GERTRUDE ELIOT AS OPHELIA . „ 96

Photo by W. & D. Downey

MR. LEWIS WALLER AS ROMEO . . . „ 113

Photo by Lang fier

ILLUSTRATIONS

MISS CONSTANCE COLLIER AS JULIET	<i>Facing p.</i>	128
<i>Photo by L. Caswall Smith</i>		
MR. OTHO STUART AS BRUTUS	„	145
<i>Photo by D. McNeill, Stratford-upon-Avon</i>		
MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER AS SHYLOCK AND MISS VIOLET VANBRUGH AS PORTIA	„	160
<i>Photo by Ellis & Walery</i>		
MR. OSCAR ASCHE AS OTHELLO	„	177
<i>Photo by C. Histed</i>		
MR. HENRY AINLEY AS ROMEO	„	192
<i>Photo by Ellis & Walery</i>		
THE LATE GEORGE R. WEIR AS SIR TOBY BELCH	„	209
<i>Photo by W. J. Kilpatrick, Dublin</i>		
MORRIS DANCERS AT STRATFORD-UPON-AVON	„	224
<i>Photo by Central News Agency</i>		

FOREWORD

I AM very proud to be asked to write a Foreword to a work published by a firm so long associated with the name of John Ruskin; proud that our work at Stratford should be regarded, by the writers of it, as part of that campaign against the unloveliness of modern life in which Ruskin was the protagonist. The outlines of the dream that Mr. Charles Flower and the founders of the Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare Memorial, their friends and successors, have been dreaming and developing for more than thirty years may be summed up in the following general terms.

Even if the exact shape of the towers be lost in the clouds, the rainbow and the sunshine, seemingly variable because ever growing; if for a moment one is bewildered by the vastness of its possibilities for the future, one is recalled to action in the present by the practical example of the founder and by the joyous stir and bustle attending the Festival. One of the

FOREWORD

pleasures of the dream is that its foundation is on solid earth, formulated in bricks and mortar linked to Warwickshire soil by creeping plants and twining flowers. For the man and his co-workers, who will always have the chief honour of designing the fabric, like the rest of our race, could do as well as dream. The picture has many settings. Here is one of them.

It is the first of May. The dreamer is lying on a smooth lawn by the river-side; part of the garden attached to the theatre buildings. To the right, through a frame of rush and willow, yew and cedar and elm, the spire of the church looks down on the mill where Celt, Roman, Saxon and Dane, Norman and Englishman for centuries have ground their harvest. In front, beyond the river, stretches the playing-field of the town; secured to the towns-folk for ever by wise burgesses. The playing-fields are deserted to-day, save for a few youths enjoying the last kick of the season at a football, or their first renewal of the controversy between cricket bat and ball. The leisure energy of the community is occupied elsewhere.

The clock in the old church tower strikes twelve, and the jackdaws and the starlings notify to the rooks that another sun has

FOREWORD

reached its zenith ; but the rooks, busy giving their offspring a final lesson in aviation, merely caw back composedly, "It is so, all is well." On the river one or two boats and the swans with their cygnets are to be seen making for the croft on the other side of the theatre, where the ban or militia were wont in ancient days to assemble for practice in arms. The Bancroft,¹ too, is the perpetual possession of the people, thanks to the same wise policy.

But hark ! I hear the minstrels play, and after them I know the rout is coming. "Such a May morning never was before," at least within our time. On to the green of the Bancroft dance the singing children of Stratford and the neighbouring villages. Young and old to the number of some thousands follow after to see the final ceremony, to tune their hearts to the rhythm of the final dance, and carry back to their homes the human harmony of the final song.

The Mayor in his chain of office, supported by the notables of the district, makes a cheery little speech. He hands a bouquet to the

¹ The derivation of the word "Bankcroft" is more usually given as that of the croft or meadow on the bank. Perhaps seeing the stress Skakespeare lays on national self-defence the other derivation given in the text may be allowed.

FOREWORD

Queen of the May, a fair little maiden seated on a throne of flowers in the midst of her court. The rough spear, entwined with ivy pointing upwards, connects the eternal homage paid by age to youth with the primitive worship from our ancestors to the earth and the sun. Then the Folk-songs of our forefathers ring out blithely on the spring air, and the twinkling feet of the little dancers on the grass catch something of the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse and the music of the spheres. Among the crowd are many people from over-seas; blood brothers of the race, fellow subjects from distant parts of our Empire, friends from foreign countries all the world over—Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Russia, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and the Balkans. The Spaniard, the Bohemian, the African, the Asiatic recognise in many of the dances some primitive ceremony still in vogue among their own folk to this day. In the Broom dance of an elderly but active villager the American from Honolulu notes as an old friend the spear dance of the Pacific Islanders. The Indian Prince, guest of honour on this occasion, expresses his pleasure at being present with words full of meaning. "I will take back to my country the story of your

FOREWORD

song and your dance and your Shakespeare Festival, that my people may have more joy in their lives, and that your folk and my folk may better understand each other's religion." As said an Eastern in a byegone age, "Your people shall be my people, and your gods my gods." And then the May-day part of the Festival ends and the crowd disperse to their various tasks, and the Queen of the May steals forth in the afternoon to lay her crown and the bouquet, given by the Mayor, on her father's recently made grave. For her, as for the others, sorrow sojourneth but for a season in the promise of the May.

"The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;
What is her burying grave, that is her womb.
And from her womb children of divers kind
We sucking on her natural bosom find;
Many for many virtues excellent,
None but for some, and yet all different.
O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities."

The dreamer watches the streams of people scatter, some to the library or to the picture gallery, some to study the heraldic meaning of the decorations in the streets—the blazon of achievement won by Warwickshire worthies or heroes of Shakespeare's verse; some to the

FOREWORD

birthplace or the school, the cottage of Anne Hathaway, the home of Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, or the monument in the church. The bands of teachers troop off to their daily lessons in Folk-song and Folk-dances, or to hear a lecture on Folk-Lore, or Shakespeare's Girls and their Flowers. Some repair to the exhibition of arms and armour, of household gear and furniture—the furniture and metal-work made in the days when handicraft and skilled workmanship were the cherished possessions of every artisan. Or the onlooker may have followed the man with the spade, unconsciously helping to solve the problem of how to make a profit of £60 a year out of a single acre. His thoughts, however, going back to the land and the garden city, would be interrupted by another phase in this cradle of English yeoman life. He catches sight of a country waggon drawn by a gaily-decked horse half-hidden with tapestry, embroideries, and woven webs, whence look out the wistful faces of some workers from the neighbouring school of needlework, not strong enough to join in the dances except with their deft hands and hearts. Some, had he questioned them, would have told him that their poet had shown them in the Playhouse how “we

FOREWORD

English became what we are and how we can keep so." He would have reverently recognised that power of growth in the great Master's work that makes him eternally modern, so that the people of a thousand years hence will still have their lesson to learn to apply properly the wisdom of the Anglo-Celtic seer to the practical details of their everyday life. But now the crowd are beginning to re-assemble that they may attend the evening performance, and the dreamer will have to hurry off to get his place at the theatre. It may be that he will see some pilgrim from the country-side, visiting the theatre for the first time in her life, drop on her knees and pray, vaguely realising that this Festival of Drama may have something to do with the relation of man to God. He may hear in the theatre such remarks as "He is a clever one that wrote yon." Or the simple conclusion, breathlessly uttered at the end of *Macbeth*, "Aye, but that chap was a waster." Then he will watch the audience disperse to rest, and he will know the pilgrims have gained something of strength and knowledge, "Aye, man, it helps one to do a better week's work."

On this starlit night, when the nightingale is singing, the triumph of the spring in every

FOREWORD

hedgerow round, the ceremony grows on his fancy and the dreamer returns to the riverside to think it out. And now in place of the swallows the bats fly their cloistered flights—

“The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night’s yawning peal.”

The waters of the Avon reflect the music of the myriad of young-eyed cherubim, and as in the surface of a shield the dreamer seeks to catch a vision of the future. His fancy builds upon the events of the day, upon the shadow of the theatre, as he sees it reflected in the starry depths. There rises before him with added courts and upper storeys a temple dedicated to the genius of the Anglo-Celtic race. Around are shrines to the Greek and the Indian Sage, to Aeschylus, to Phidias, to Plato, to Michael Angelo and Beethoven, where the service of song is perpetually celebrated by priests and pilgrims. Side by side with the Morality, the Mystery, and the Miracle play are performed *Sakuntala* and the Drama of the East. The Orphic hymn in its early and latest development mixes with the bardic drama of the Ivernian minnesingers. Goethe, Cervantes, Molière, and the moderns from every country contribute their offering at the dramatic altar,

FOREWORD

send their message of poetry—the making of life and action for the children of men. Under its roof, books, pictures, statues help to express and formulate the work of this college of humanity. Stratford, Warwickshire, the British Empire, and America join in an informal conference of the Anglo-Celtic confederation. With their differences adjusted in a world of art, music and literature their common race possession, they will realise, as they join hands with the subtle strength of India, the triumph of the Aryan Empire, which seems on this night of May to be drawing nearer with the dawn, for the pilgrims who have realised Shakespeare's message of strong and strenuous self-control. For them the blending of East and West and the reconciliation of Black and White can be left to the coming of the years.

“From the four corners of the earth they come
To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint,”

bringing in their train the fervour of the Romance nations, the discipline of the Teuton, the primitive vigour of the Slav, the enterprise of the Scandinavian, the mystic reverence of the Oriental.

The gazer in the stream can, in fancy, hear

FOREWORD

the prayer of agony, the praise of joy, the lyric of love, the pæan of the battle, the call of the blood, the anthem of a new awakened and a larger faith, mingled with the thousand voices of our mother Earth, as the Master Singer unrolls his written scroll. Above these variant notes, dominant, insistent, in the great peace of the night sounds the call of the Higher Humanity, throbs the note of nature that makes the whole world kin.

“If it be not now, yet it will come”; let be—the workers round the temple can wait.

F. R. BENSON.



THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL
THEATRE AT STRATFORD-
UPON-AVON

A RECORD OF ITS WORK

By ARTHUR HUTCHINSON



THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE AT STRATFORD- UPON-AVON

A FALLACY very commonly maintained by those who have set themselves to doubt the identity of the play-actor of Stratford-upon-Avon with the author of the great literary heritage known as the work of William Shakespeare, has consisted in the frequent statement that Shakespeare himself attained but little glory while he lived, and gained still less tribute from those who came after him within the century or more that immediately followed his death.

It is a point of curiosity that any such view should ever have gained currency, either in print or in conversational argument, for, as a matter of fact, the praise of Shakespeare went onward in steady development and accumulation, from the tributes of his contemporaries and immediate successors in literature —“Rare Ben Jonson,” Francis Meres (“the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speak English"), Richard Barnfield, John Weever, Michael Drayton, and others—to the stately eulogy of Milton's famous sonnet.

From Milton's time onward, through the modish literature of the Restoration period, and the more pedantic feeling of eighteenth-century criticism, approval of Shakespeare progressed, until the more humane spirit of nineteenth-century letters completed the shrine of appreciation that had gradually been built around the name and work of Stratford's son, who, in Ben Jonson's phrase, "was not for an age, but for all time." The compiler of "Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse" gave an interesting survey of the continuity with which homage was paid to Shakespeare throughout the first century after his death, and Mr. C. E. Hughes, in his delightful volume, "The Praise of Shakespeare," presents a still more comprehensive record, and one brought down to the tributes of our own day.

It is, however, somewhat curious, but still the fact, that while the literary love for Shakespeare's work, and the resulting increase in the study of it, marched steadily onward, belief in the poet's plays as entertainments for

THE
STRAITFORD-UPON-AVON
RIVER



MINIATURE TOWN

Photo by A. Tyler, Stratford-upon-Avon

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THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

the theatre-going public gradually decreased, from the days of their "improvement" and adaptation for the artificial tastes of the period by Dryden, Nahum Tate, and other playwrights, until, by the middle of the Victorian era, only some half dozen, or but few more than that, of the greater tragedies and comedies could be said any longer to hold the stage. Samuel Phelps, in his memorable management of Sadler's Wells Theatre, did his utmost to remove this reproach; but, with the gradual passing of the actors trained in the traditions of the old "stock" companies, all but the more admittedly popular of Shakespeare's plays were relegated from the stage to the study again. There they awaited the full renaissance of the Shakespearean drama on the stage under the enlightened rule of the more literary of our modern actor-managers.

Meanwhile Shakespeare's native town of Stratford-upon-Avon was in even poorer plight than the metropolis or the larger provincial cities, since it obviously could not offer the strongest form of inducement to the actor-managers of succeeding generations to make any lengthy sojourn within its gates for the sole purpose of producing the Shakespearean drama. For many years it could not even

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

extend the hospitality of a permanent theatre for stage visitors of repute at any ordinary period of the year, but erected a temporary pavilion for the occasional commemoration of that son who in its noble parish church lay "as lord, not tenant to the grave."

The first recorded celebration of Shakespeare's memory in his native place, as distinct from the ordinary performance of his more popular plays by strolling players,—among whom are known to have been both Peg Woffington and Roger Kemble, the father of the famous Mrs. Siddons—was a performance of "Othello" given in 1748 by a touring manager of some repute named John Ward, the maternal grandfather of Mrs. Siddons, for the raising of funds to repair Shakespeare's monument in the church.

The performance realised £17, and the occasion has been handed down to the present time by a curiously direct memento in the form of a pair of buckskin gloves which are believed to have belonged originally to Shakespeare. They were presented, as such, in recognition of the performance, to the actor John Ward, by Shakespeare Hart, a descendant of the poet's sister. Ward subsequently gave them to David Garrick, from whom they passed to

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

Mrs. Siddons, and through her to Fanny Kemble, who presented them to Dr. Horace Howard Furness, the eminent American authority on Shakespeare's work.

The first Shakespearean Commemoration of any organised importance was a "Jubilee" promoted by David Garrick in 1769. This was in its way a very brilliant affair, but concerned itself less with the actual plays of Shakespeare than has since become the custom, banquets, balls, and even horse-racing forming the larger part of its programme.

The opening of a regular theatre in 1827 led to the visiting of Stratford by many well-graced players. Hither came the Keans, father and son, Macready, Dillon, Mrs. Nisbett, and others who made the theatrical history of their day. The more popular of Shakespeare's plays were given from time to time by these and less distinguished actors, but after a time the theatre fell on evil days. At last, in 1872, it was bought by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, and pulled down, amid general approval, in order that the ground which it now cumbered to no sufficient purpose might be restored to its former state, as part of the garden belonging to New Place, the home of Shakespeare after his withdrawal from London life.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

In the course of these ordinary professional performances there were held two Festivals—one in 1827 and the other in 1830—which were intended to inaugurate a series to be held once every three years, but the scheme fell through after the second celebration. Thereafter all commemoration ceremonies fell into abeyance until 1864, when the tercentenary of the poet's birth was marked by a series of performances of his plays, in which Buckstone, Compton, Creswick, and Sothern took part.

The great success of this Festival, which was held in a temporary building erected for the purpose, inspired local enthusiasts with a wish for a more permanent headquarters for future celebrations. At length, in 1875, a few Stratford-upon-Avon men, led by the late Charles Edward Flower, formed themselves into an Association for the purpose of building, as a memorial to Shakespeare in his native town, a theatre to form a permanent centre for the frequent revival of his works, without regard to the limitations all too long imposed upon the selection of plays by the preferences of "star" actors or the determination of the older playgoing public that only a few of the most famous tragedies and comedies of

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

the poet could be considered at all attractive in the theatre.

The scheme also included a library for the collection and preservation of the literature connected with the poet's work, and a picture gallery for the display of art chiefly inspired by his themes, whether on canvas or in stone or other medium. In 1877 this project was fulfilled by the opening of the handsome Memorial Theatre, which, with its fine library and picture gallery and its spacious gardens on the bank of the Avon, has in the years that have passed become a very real and valuable centre of Shakespearean study.

It is thirty-four years since the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre was built at Stratford-upon-Avon, and to-day, in 1911, it remains the only endowed theatre in England. It is the only theatre of which the charter enables its Governors to work not for dividends but solely for the particular interests of dramatic art which they have in view. "Organise the theatre," said Matthew Arnold, and the Governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre have done their best to endow and organise "the constant reiteration of Shakespeare's words" in all their extraordinary truth of inspiration and nobility of ideal, individual and national.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Between the years 1875 and 1908 Mr. Charles Flower and his wife, who long survived him, contributed some £50,000 to the building and endowment of the Memorial, and at her death Mrs. Flower bequeathed to the Association the riverside property of Avonbank which adjoins the original grounds of the Memorial buildings, and therefore considerably extends their domain for the benefit of future generations.

To illustrate the principles upon which the theatre is governed, it may be of interest to quote here a clause of the Articles of Association :—

“The income and property of the Association, whencesoever derived, shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Association as set forth in this Memorandum of Association : and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, by way of dividend or bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit, to the persons who at any time are, or have been, Members of the Association, or to any of them or to any person claiming through any of them. Provided that nothing herein shall prevent the payment in good faith of remuneration to any officers or servants of the Association or to any Members

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

of the Association or other person in return for any services actually rendered to the Association."

In the Memorial Theatre, which thus came into existence, Shakespeare's reputed birthday and his probable death-day too, April 23rd, and a varying number of preceding or ensuing days, have for the past thirty years seen the performance of a number of the poet's plays. And each year has added to this list at least one play not previously performed there, until but three remain unproduced, "Titus Andronicus," "Troilus and Cressida," and "All's Well that Ends Well."

To have added such a goodly number of previously neglected works to the ranks of the comparatively few which have been at all frequently glorified by sumptuous "long-run" revivals would have amounted to an achievement more than justifying the Memorial Theatre of its critics, even if the plays had been mounted but now and again. But with the growth of the Festival's audiences, and the consequent extension of the annual series of performances, it has now for some years been possible to repeat quite a large number of these revivals every year. Thus Shakespeare's town can

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

to-day with honourable pride claim to be the one place in the world where a visitor can witness as many as sixteen of the poet's plays within a brief three weeks' season.

Beginning its work at a time when even the traditions of Shakespearean acting had fallen out of memory with the passing of the older generations of players, and only a few of the more familiar of the poet's tragedies and comedies were at all frequently performed upon the English stage, the Council of the Memorial Theatre set itself to restore to the modern theatre the long array of Shakespeare's tragedies, comedies, and historical plays, which had all too long been omitted from any theatrical repertoire in the poet's own country, and could be seen performed only in the subsidised theatres of Germany. The opening production, in 1877, was "Much Ado about Nothing," in which Lady Martin, the famous Helen Faucit of earlier days, emerged from her retirement and played Beatrice to the Benedick of Barry Sullivan. "Hamlet," "As You Like It," and other plays were also included in the programme of this first of the modern Festivals.

In the following year the Memorial Council again availed itself of Barry Sullivan's





Photo by Chancellor, Dublin

MR. F. R. BENSON AS HENRY V.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

experience for the conduct of the revivals, and then for two years Mr. Edward Compton, whose distinguished father had contributed much to the success of the 1864 Celebration, was entrusted with the artistic control of a programme which included "Twelfth Night," "Romeo and Juliet," and "The Comedy of Errors" as chief novelties. In 1883 Mr. Elliot Galer, an Englishman chiefly associated as actor with the American stage, added "Macbeth," "Henry IV., Part I.," and "King Lear" to the list of the Memorial productions, and in the following two years Miss Alleyn contributed "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," and "Love's Labour Lost."

The list of productions already wears an important air, but it must be admitted that they had so far been leavened with sundry modern plays that were in no sense worthy of the occasion. The real fact probably was that the affair still remained for the most part a local one, and local audiences were not large enough to require several performances of one play. The Festival had still to await the gradual growth of a gathering of visitors such as now supports it. In 1886 the control of the theatrical arrangements was for the first time entrusted by the Memorial Council to

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Mr. F. R. Benson, who had not long before organised his now famous Shakespearean Repertoire Company. Since then Mr. and Mrs. Benson and their company have been responsible for the productions of the Memorial Theatre, with the exception of those of 1889-90, when the performances were directed by the late Osmond Tearle, and of 1895, when Mr. Ben Greet was invited to produce the series of plays for the year, and with his revival of "The Winter's Tale," with Mr. H. B. Irving, Miss Beatrice Lamb, Miss Dorothea Baird, and Miss Louie Freear in the cast, made a notable addition to the Memorial Theatre's record.

With the more continuous policy made possible by a single directorate the reputation of the Memorial productions has grown apace.

When the Memorial buildings were first projected, many a voice was raised to protest that the one thing lacking would prove to be the audience. The prophecy has proved idle. By 1897, when the theatre was just twenty years old, the Festival's brief span of a week was extended to a fortnight, and in five years came a further expansion to three weeks; and with each added week has come the further series of audiences that the enterprise

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

required. And the year 1910 brought the most important development of all in the establishing of a summer season of a further three weeks' period in addition to the older Spring Festival. It has thus become feasible to arrange programmes of greater variety than was possible in old days, especially as Stratford's expansion has found an increasingly generous spirit of co-operation on the part of many of the most distinguished players of our time. Thus a Festival programme nowadays provides not only a galaxy of histrionic talent, but that further point of interest which the epicure in such matters finds in studying the work of different players, of different personalities and temperaments, as manifested in the same play, within a few days of attendance at the Memorial Theatre. The Festival playgoer is thus afforded an opportunity for studies in comparative criticism which the conditions of ordinary theatrical management can seldom offer.

It has been an interesting scheme that has been carried out during the last few years at this, our only endowed theatre, and one that has done much to consolidate the artistic success of the Memorial project.

Each year some play long banished from

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

the stage has been revived with special elaboration, and at a time when most of these works, such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Tempest," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "Twelfth Night," "Timon of Athens," and the historical plays, Roman and English, had been entirely neglected on the London or provincial stage for practically a whole generation, they were revived year by year at the Memorial Theatre, and not revived for the moment merely, but carried away to the country as part of the regular repertoire of Mr. Benson's itinerary and brought back to Stratford-upon-Avon to be repeated in support of the chief novelty of the next year's series. "The Merry Wives of Windsor," for instance, first revived at the Festival of 1886, when it had not been seen on the stage at all for many a long day, has been frequently given in ensuing years in immediate company with the historical plays in which Falstaff figures. Thus the Festival playgoer has achieved Queen Elizabeth's wish to see the truculent knight pass from the plays which show him in the real history of his day, but only as a subordinate character, into the rôle of protagonist in the world of merriment with which the poet endowed the wives of Windsor.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

"Julius Cæsar," again, first revived in 1891, has since been repeated, in all the fresh effectiveness which the historical plays acquire by such proximity to each other, in Festival programmes in which it has stood midway between the other Roman plays, "Coriolanus" and "Antony and Cleopatra." Few points of interest in such matters could be more illuminating than the contrast brought out by this juxtaposition between the austerity of the Rome of "Coriolanus," the fuller yet still self-critical spirit of the Rome of "Julius Cæsar," and the sensuous abandonment of that gorgeous East which Cleopatra held in fee. As far as one can gather, the experiment of giving these three plays from Roman history in close conjunction had never before been attempted on any stage, any more than had the intensely interesting scheme subsequently carried out at the Memorial Theatre, by the performance, in chronological sequence, of Shakespeare's long series of plays from English history.

The interest of these chronicle-plays is enormously enhanced by their consecutive performance in the historical order of their events. Such a moment as Henry the Fifth's prayer before the Battle of Agincourt, wherein the kneeling monarch protests his attempted atonement

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

for the murder of Richard the Second, which secured his father's crown, becomes doubly poignant when the auditors have but two nights previously seen the hapless Richard grace the triumph of proud Bolingbroke, and but one night since have witnessed the alarums and excursions which left that same victorious Bolingbroke small joy in his advancing years.

The trumpet-call of English patriotism sounded at the close of "King John" forms the prelude to Shakespeare's long epic in dramatic form, which closes with the vision of national prosperity foreshadowed in the baptismal blessing of the infant Queen Elizabeth, in the last Act of "Henry VIII." Then comes the Lancastrian trilogy which, as Professor Dowden effectively says, "commences with 'The Tragedy of King Richard II.' and closes with 'The Life of King Henry V.'" In four successive plays is presented the story of the rise and triumph of the House of Lancaster. Four other plays—the three parts of 'King Henry VI.' and 'The Tragedy of King Richard III.'—present the story of the decline of the House of Lancaster and the rise and fall of the House of York. These plays of the Wars of the Roses and the life and death of the usurper Richard were the

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

work of Shakespeare's 'prentice hand, when he worked in conjunction with some of his early contemporaries, and was subject to the dominant influence of the greatest among them — Christopher Marlowe. The Lancastrian group contains some early work, for 'King Richard II.' cannot be remote in date from 'King Richard III.'; but the former of these plays, whether chronologically the second in order or not, is far more independent and native to Shakespeare's genius as a dramatic work than the Marlowesque tragedy of 'King Richard III.' The Lancastrian group has also in it work which represents Shakespeare's full maturity as a craftsman in 'dramatic history.' It excels the Yorkist series of plays beyond all comparison in its fine studies of character, in its presentation of heroic action, and in its free and joyous humour.

"The action may be said to move on without interruption from the opening of 'King Richard II.' to the close of 'King Henry V.,' from Bolingbroke's challenge of Norfolk to the wooing of the French princess by the victor of Agincourt.

"Then follows the series of dramas presenting the rise and fall of the House of York, and through the eight plays which make up the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

whole connected series of Lancaster and York, runs a continuous moral purpose—a setting forth, as it were, of the justice of God in the history of England, the sins of the father being visited upon the children or upon the children's children, until at last on Bosworth Field the evil has reached its term, and Richmond and Elizabeth—

‘The true succeeders of each royal house’—

enter ‘by God’s fair ordinance,’ on their heritage of loyalty and peace.”¹

Vivid and impressive as are each of these plays singly, taken as a consecutive series they present us with a vision of history extraordinarily illuminative of the national character.

“Shakespeare’s kings are not, nor are meant,” as Walter Pater says, “to be, great men : rather, little or quite ordinary humanity, thrust upon greatness, with those pathetic results, the natural self-pity of the weak heightened in them into irresistible appeal to others as the net result of their royal prerogative. One after another, they seem to lie composed in Shakespeare’s embalming pages, with just that touch of

¹ Shakespeare’s “Henry IV., Parts I. and II.,” illustrated by Edward Grützner. Introduction by Edward Dowden, LL.D. Cassell & Co.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

Nature about them, making the whole world akin, which has infused into their tombs at Westminster a rare poetic grace.”¹

While these kings were living their little day the national character was evolving, slowly and imperceptibly. Even Shakespeare himself when he wrote these plays, or rewrote them from older models, could not see their full historical value, because he lived too soon to see the long results of the strange happenings which he merely accepted from their first chroniclers. But he accepted with an extraordinarily fine sense of selection, and throughout he seems to see the general trend of the English character, while monarch succeeded monarch and then went down to “Death’s public tiring-house.” In these historical plays, ranging from “King John” to “Henry VIII.,” he shows himself not only as a great dramatist, but as an English patriot, illustrating the slow but sturdy growth of his own countrymen.

The splendidly vivid interest with which Shakespeare has endowed this long series of pictures of the gradual but continuous evolution of the English national character under many rulers, was emphasised to the full for the first time, for the bulk of the audiences, by

¹ “Appreciations,” by Walter Pater. Macmillan & Co.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

the staging of these plays, and the effect was strangely moving. The series of performances will endure as a most interesting memory to all who witnessed them, and as a monument of what has been accomplished at Stratford-upon-Avon, in a cause which had previously been attempted only in Germany.

If the Memorial Theatre had done nothing else in its history but provide this fascinating experience, it would be more than justified of all its critics. An instrument of national education of the finest value would be supplied by the more frequent performance of these plays, especially if given, as at Stratford, in their chronological sequence.

But even the most ardent of Stratford's pilgrims lives not by chronicle-plays alone, and amid all the recondite labour of restoring to the stage such all too long neglected work, the more generally popular of Shakespeare's plays have still yearly held their own. The Prince of Denmark has tardily avenged his father's murder, not only within the wonted limits of the modern stage, but in the larger sphere of character and motive supplied by the performance of the entire text of the play, with whole speeches and scenes long omitted from accepted "acting versions." Verona's star-crossed lovers

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

have plighted their tragic troth, Othello has loved the gentle Desdemona "not wisely but too well," Macbeth has murdered sleep, and fond King Lear has made division of his kingdom.

Shylock has been baffled of his bond by the Portia come to judgment, Sir Toby Belch and his fellow-roysterers have fooled Malvolio in the Illyrian garden, Beatrice and Benedick have made a match of their two mad wits, Petruchio and his Katharine have stormed their way to happy wedlock. Rosalind and her fellows have met to "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world," here upon the confines of the very Forest of Arden of which Shakespeare wrote, while the foresters have borne on to the stage a deer from the same Charlecote Park wherein tradition says the poet went a-deer-stealing—"Shakespeare, poacher, or whatever else," as Carlyle has it, "our supreme modern European man."

Other local associations are not far to seek in the plays which mention actual places in the very course of their events, but even when the poet lets his fancy roam and takes the world for his stage, the colour of the Warwickshire countryside is never missing long. Illyria, Bohemia, Messina, Tuscany—all in turn, in

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

some of their poet's most lovable moments, become transmuted into simple Warwickshire, so that his own stage directions for one of his plays might be reversed and his native countryside be accounted for, once and for all, as to be found "dispersedly in various countries."

His "Wood near Athens" slopes over towards the bank of the soft-flowing Avon, and Nick Bottom and his fellow "rude mechanicals" are true-born Warwickshire yokels, although they "work for bread upon Athenian stalls." Titania's "nine men's morris" recalls the forebears of the very dancers who revive their old-world measure at present-day Festivals, and Oberon and Titania have planted their Grecian forest with the same wild-flowers which to-day are strewn in the church where—

"Kings for such a tomb should wish to die."

And who more Midland in his rusticity than the "rural fellow" who bears unto the grim Egyptian monument "the pretty worm of Nilus" to bring liberty to Cleopatra?

Hamlet abandons his journey towards England only to find a typical Warwickshire peasant digging the grave for Ophelia, and the stream in which—

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

“ Her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook,”

flows even nearer Stratford than the water in which a maid of Clopton met her death, and suggested to the poet, says tradition, the manner of Ophelia's pitiful end. Both King Lear and Ophelia in their madness toy with the same old-fashioned Warwickshire flowers as Perdita in her simple joy.

Even if this process of identification be “to consider too curiously,” there is still no escaping from the charm of the conditions of playgoing amid the green meadows and old-world buildings associated with the life of Stratford's dramatist. In a delightful article on the subject which first appeared in *The Speaker*, and has since been reprinted in his volume of essays entitled “Ideas of Good and Evil,” Mr. W. B. Yeats says :—

“I have been hearing Shakespeare, as the traveller in ‘News from Nowhere’ might have heard him, had he not been hurried back into our noisy time. One passes through quiet streets, where gabled and red-tiled houses remember the Middle Age, to a theatre that has been made not to make money, but for the pleasure of making it, like the market houses that set the traveller chuckling; nor

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

does one find it among hurrying cabs and ringing pavements, but in a green garden by a river side. Inside I have to be content for a while with a chair, for I am unexpected, and there is not an empty seat but this ; and yet there is no one who has come merely because one must go somewhere after dinner. All day, too, one does not hear or see an incongruous or noisy thing, but spends the hours reading the plays, and the wise and foolish things men have said of them, in the library of the theatre, with its oak-panelled walls and leaded windows of tinted glass ; or one rows by reedy banks and by old farmhouses, and by old churches among great trees. It is certainly one's fault if one opens a newspaper, for Mr. Benson gives one a new play every night, and one need talk of nothing but the play in the inn-parlour, under the oak beams blackened by time and showing the mark of the adze that shaped them. I have seen this week 'King John,' 'Richard II.,' the second part of 'Henry IV.,' 'Henry V.,' and the second part of 'Henry VI.,' and 'Richard III.' played in their right order, with all the links that bind play to play unbroken ; and partly because of a spirit in the place, and partly because of the way play supports play, the

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

theatre has moved me as it has never done before. That strange procession of kings and queens, of warring nobles, of insurgent crowds, of courtiers, and of people of the gutter has been to me almost too visible, too audible, too full of an unearthly energy. I have felt as I have sometimes felt on grey days on the Galway shore, when a faint mist has hung over the grey sea and the grey stones, as if the world might suddenly vanish and leave nothing behind, not even a little dust under one's feet. The people my mind's eye has seen have too much of the extravagance of dreams, like all the inventions of art before our crowded life had brought moderation and compromise, to seem more than a dream, and yet all else has grown dim before them.

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“The easiness of travel, which is always growing, began by emptying the country, but it may end by filling it; for adventures like this of Stratford-on-Avon show that people are ready to journey from all parts of England and Scotland and Ireland, and even from America, to live with their favourite art as shut away from the world as though they were

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

‘in retreat,’ as Catholics say. Nobody but an impressionist painter, who hides it in light and mist, even pretends to love a street for its own sake ; and could we meet our friends and hear music and poetry in the country, none of us that are not captive would ever leave the thrushes.”¹

Writing on the same subject, another visitor to Stratford’s Festival, Mr. C. E. Montague, says in his brilliant volume of “Dramatic Values,” reprinted from his contributions to *The Manchester Guardian* :—

“A thing not easily to be spoilt for you in Stratford is the way you go to the theatre there, at any rate on a fine evening in late April, in a year when the spring has not been soured by an ill-placed frost. . . . You go into it from a garden by a river, alive just now with little jocund noises ; there is that sound which to hear is like drinking cool water in summer—the dip of oars and the little tinkle of laughter from people coming home in boats at twilight ; beyond the stream some lambs are leaping about in a meadow of juicy grass, or posting back to their mothers in silent thirst. Wherever you look, behold ! it is very good. Behind

¹ “Ideas of Good and Evil,” by W. B. Yeats. T. Fisher Unwin and A. H. Bullen.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

you the little ordered country town is in the oddly gay mixed light of lamps early lit and of the lengthening daylight ; in front, beyond the lambs, the fields rise and fall softly till they go out of sight, the quintessence of the contained and friendly English Midland landscape. When these things have possessed your souls with content, you go through a door and see, it may be, 'As You Like It,' acted by artists on whom they are working too—at any rate, you think so. The audience, on the whole, is picked and fit, for there is no mere fashion of coming here, to bring many quite vacuous spectators ; no one comes who does not care for plays or acting ; people laugh at the right place in comedy ; the space between them and the actors is not the non-conductor of emotion that it often seems to be elsewhere ; it quivers with communicative quickness ; you do not have a sense that artist's intention and public's perception are fumbling for each other in a dark room ; you feel the stir of a common intellectual excitement changing all the hard disparate atoms in the auditorium into one quickened brain whose joint apprehension is not, as in most theatres, the apprehension of the dullest, but that of the eager and clear, the ones with speculation in

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

their eyes. What dead silence receives, in most theatres, Le Beau's discreet civility—

‘ Hereafter, in a better world than this,
I shall desire more love and knowledge of you !’

“ It is not, or was not, so at Stratford ; you feel a whole audience to be delightedly tasting flavours and valuing qualities in what they hear.

“ After an act you step out into the more than pastoral quietude of a country town settling to rest after the day. The growth of stillness, since you went in, is measured for you by the new clearness of the little distant sounds, voices at far off cottage doors, or the shouts of a few children late at their play in the meadows. When the play ends, outside there is white river mist and dead silence. You all go to bed like one household. Half an hour after the *Oresteia* was done there was not a sound in the High Street ; at midnight the footsteps of two belated actors and their voices at the corner as they said good-night rang like a sound in midnight Oxford.”¹

The record of the Memorial Theatre has hitherto been primarily a Shakespearean one, but other interesting revivals and productions

¹ “ Dramatic Values,” by C. E. Montague. Methuen & Co.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

have occasionally figured in the programme. Possibly those who are pilgrims to Stratford for the sole purpose of this series of performances would prefer to remain undisturbed in their Shakespearean mood. But then there is the very considerable local element of the audiences to be considered, the element drawn not only from the town of Stratford itself, but from a large surrounding district, and the late Mr. Charles Flower and the other founders of the Memorial Theatre had it ever before them as an ideal to endow a home primarily for Shakespearean celebrations, but incidentally also for a good deal else that is worthiest of repetition in our dramatic literature, whether ancient or modern. They intended, indeed, to concede, and even to approve the fact that there have been dramatists both before and after Shakespeare, just as "there were heroes before Agamemnon," though *longo intervàllo*.

The idea has seemed more suitable to the occasion since the Festival's span was extended to three weeks, and some of the non-Shakespearean fare presented has proved remarkably interesting. The difference between the ideal of tragedy held by the Greek dramatists and that of Shakespeare has been illustrated by a very impressive production of the Orestean

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

trilogy of Æschylus. Typical work of Shakespeare's predecessors on the English stage has been seen in four of the Chester "Mystery" plays, and in Christopher Marlowe's "Edward II.," and his contemporaries have been represented by Ben Jonson's "Every Man in His Humour." Of later dramatists Wycherley (adapted by Garrick), Sheridan, Goldsmith, Tom Taylor, Lord Lytton, Mr. Stephen Phillips, and Mr. G. E. Morrison and Mr. R. P. Stewart, with their interesting play "Don Quixote," presenting the hero of Shakespeare's great Spanish contemporary, Cervantes, had divided the honours of these non-Shakespearean performances, with the addition of certain one-act plays, down to last year. Then the innovation of a prize of £300 offered by one of the governors of the Memorial Theatre resulted in the selection, out of 315 plays submitted, of "The Piper," a new version of the Pied Piper of Hamelin's story by an American poet, Josephine Preston Peabody (Mrs. Lionel Marks).

It would almost seem that in his elaborate classification of the drama, Polonius had the Festival programme generally in view, for surely no other repertoire company has ever presented as varied a bill as that which forms



Photo by L. Caswall Smith

MRS. F. R. BENSON AS CONSTANCE

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

the annual three weeks' traffic of the Memorial stage. But, thanks to the fine spirit of co-operation in which many accomplished players share the arduous work of rehearsal and performance, it is possible to adopt the description given by Polonius himself in answer to Hamlet's question, "What players are they?" and to say :—

"The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited : Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light."

For among the players who have taken part in the Memorial Theatre performances may be named the following :—

Mr. Henry Ainley.	Mr. W. H. Calvert.
Mr. Oscar Asche.	Mr. Louis Calvert.
Mr. Lewis Ball.	Mr. James Carew.
Mr. Shiel Barry.	Mr. Murray Carrington.
Mr. F. R. Benson.	Mr. O. B. Clarence.
Mr. Charles Bibby.	Mr. Hannam Clark.
Mr. Acton Bond.	Mr. John Coleman.
Mr. Arthur Bouchier.	Mr. Edward Compton.
Mr. Graham Browne.	Mr. Thalberg Corbett.
Mr. Alfred Brydone.	Mr. W. Creswick.
Mr. George Buchanan.	Mr. Clarence Derwent.
Mr. H. Caine.	Mr. John Drew.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Mr. James B. Fagan.	Mr. Stephen Phillips.
Mr. George Fitzgerald.	Mr. B. A. Pittar.
Mr. Elliot Galer.	Mr. Nigel Playfair.
Mr. A. E. George.	Mr. William Poel.
Mr. William Gilbert.	Mr. Charles Quartermaine.
Mr. Ben Greet.	Mr. Guy Rathbone.
Mr. Arthur Grenville.	Mr. J. Forbes-Robertson.
Mr. Herbert Grimwood.	Mr. Jerrold Robertshaw.
Mr. Walter Hampden.	Mr. Ian Robertson.
Mr. Martin Harvey.	Mr. Frank Rodney.
Mr. James Hearn.	Mr. Stratton Rodney.
Mr. Henry Herbert.	Mr. Herbert Ross.
Mr. H. R. Hignett.	Mr. G. Kay Souper.
Mr. H. Halliwell Hobbes.	Mr. Otho Stuart.
Mr. H. B. Irving.	Mr. Barry Sullivan.
Mr. H. Jarman.	Mr. E. Lyall Swete.
Mr. Moffat Johnston.	Mr. Osmond Tearle.
Mr. Cyril Keightley.	Sir Herbert Tree.
Mr. C. Rann Kennedy.	Mr. Hermann Vezin.
Mr. Matheson Lang.	Mr. Lewis Waller.
Mr. James Lewis.	Mr. Edward Warburton.
Mr. Robert Loraine.	Mr. George Weir.
Mr. F. H. Macklin.	Mr. Arthur Whitby.
Mr. Eric Maxon.	Mr. Harcourt Williams.
Mr. H. O. Nicholson.	Mr. J. P. Wilson.
Mr. B. Iden Payne.	Mr. F. G. Worlock.
Miss Elinor Aickin.	Miss Jessie Bateman.
Miss Alleyn.	Mrs. F. R. Benson.
Miss Sara Allgood.	Madame Sarah Bernhardt.
Miss Mary Anderson.	Mrs. Billington.
Miss Dorothea Baird.	Miss Lilian Braithwaite.
Miss Virginia Bateman	Miss Tita Brand.
(Mrs. Edward Compton).	Miss Lily Brayton.

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

Madame Marie Brema.	Miss Beatrice Lamb.
Miss Hutin Britton.	Miss Nora Lancaster.
Miss Eleanor Calhoun.	Miss Auriol Lee.
Mrs. Charles Calvert.	Miss Kitty Loftus.
Miss Elsie Chester.	Miss Marie Löhr.
Miss Constance Collier.	Miss Madge M ^c Intosh.
Miss Alice Denvil.	Miss Wynne Matthison.
Miss Marion Denvil.	Miss Jean Mackinley.
Miss N. de Silva.	Miss Evelyn Millard.
Miss Frances Dillon.	Miss Mabel Moore.
Miss Gertrude Eliot.	Madame Agnes Nicholls.
Miss Beryl Faber.	Miss Olive Noble.
Miss Violet Farebrother.	Miss Mona K. Oram.
Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Martin).	Miss Nancy Price.
Miss Ada Ferrar.	Miss Ada Rehan.
Miss Beatrice Ferrar.	Miss Constance Robertson.
Miss Louie Freear	Miss Saumarez.
Miss Margaret Halstan.	Miss Gertrude Scott.
Miss Leah Hanman.	Miss Ellen Terry.
Miss Helen Haye.	Miss Marion Terry.
Miss Kate Hodson.	Miss Violet Vanbrugh.
Miss Laura Johnson.	Miss Wallis.
Miss Mary Kingsley.	Miss Genevieve Ward.
	Miss Frances Wetherall.

Here, one may well feel confident, with Polonius, is an artistic fellowship indeed equal to every call. "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light," for the players at any rate, and as for the audiences—but that is another story! Certainly one may assume that at Stratford, at any rate, Shakespeare's own work

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

more than holds its own against the Latin author of whom another Elizabethan dramatist said, "What are twelve kicks to a man who can read Seneca?" Plautus, curiously enough, is from time to time represented on Stratford's stage indirectly, but only to the extent to which Shakespeare borrowed from him in "The Comedy of Errors."

For this golden pomp of "Tragedy, Comedy, History, Pastoral" from Shakespeare's work which year by year finds "a local habitation" on the Festival stage, a yearly larger and more cosmopolitan series of audiences has gathered. "I am always happy to meet persons who perceive the transcendent superiority of Shakespeare over all other writers," said Emerson; and the same responsive pleasure seems largely to animate the throng of visitors to Stratford's Festival, which now supplies audiences reaching a total some fourteen thousand strong in the course of the three weeks' celebration at the Memorial Theatre.

The founders of the Memorial Theatre followed the ideal of Garrick in seeking to establish at Stratford-upon-Avon a stage that should prove not merely the occasional scene of Shakespearean commemoration, but also a fitting centre for the study of dramatic literature

THE MEMORIAL THEATRE

and the practice of the art of acting. The circumstances of modern life have counted against the full development of this ideal. The number of students or actors who can spare the time to make a lengthy sojourn in a place where they have no other cause for residence than the frequenting of the Memorial Theatre and library, has hitherto been limited. Yet the name of the players who have shared in the high endeavour of Stratford's undertaking now approaches legion, and the weeks of their performances in each year are growing into months. And one very satisfactory result of the Festivals is to be seen in the constant translating of the Memorial productions to many another stage. Visitors to Stratford's Festival cannot but feel that something of the fitting qualities of place and occasion has contributed to the luminous revival of many of the plays for which all acting "traditions" had long been lost, and are accordingly glad that the work contributed to the annual Festival is often repeated in London and other centres by the players, to an extent which may be considered to give to the Memorial productions a value exceeding the scope of merely local commemoration.

For the last thing that your serious Festival-

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

goer desires is that the Memorial Theatre should remain, in all the fastness of its Warwickshire riverside, the be-all and the end-all of Shakespearean revival. And a considerable part of the ideal which inspired its founders is being carried into effect, while the artistic impulse given to the actors' work survives in productions borne onward through the land, to "give the world assurance" of Stratford's great son—

"Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime,
With tears and laughter for all time !"

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THE NATURE OF DRAMA

By REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

THE NATURE OF DRAMA

IN the following chapters I set forth the main lines of a personal and unreserved faith in Stratford as a centre of Anglo-Celtic Art, the circumference of which constantly extends.

My words have the peculiar value of being the confession of a convert, who holds no sort of official connection with the movement.

Any other value that they may have will be enhanced by a study of the works to which reference has been made in these pages. Though, frankly, I write for the holiday-maker rather than for the student.

So curious is the common attitude to the theatre that it is worth our while to trace dramatic origins, and to mark out clearly the reasons for a more human and hopeful view of the drama :—

The Drama sprang from the people as an expression of joy in community.

Long before Shakespeare, Folk Art existed as at once a pleasure and an expression of racial religion.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Shakespeare, through personal genius and kinship with the spirit of his day, concentrated within himself its vigour and tendencies.

Shakespeare is the standard-bearer of the race through the ages.

The True Theatre is a Cathedral of Human Joy.

Wagner, by virtue of race-kinship, stands in close relationship with our work, and, unlike Shakespeare, himself imagined a Festival Theatre as a home of Indo-European Art. Bayreuth was never intended as a Wagner Theatre.

If the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre is to cover the range of national feeling, music-drama and choral singing cannot be ignored, though the sectioning of different art-forms has kept them apart from the modern theatre.

If Folk Art in all its branches reveals the Joy of Mankind, our contemporary drama, our architecture, and education must clear a way through the tangled forest of civilisation, giving us cities and villages as beautiful as the dreams of our artists.

Though art must never preach or become propagandist, unless it be the revelation of beauty and life the artist is reduced to impotence, and life itself becomes an unfulfilled promise, which is a lie.

NOTE.—Certain passages in these chapters are the embodiment of ideas that have appeared in *T.P.'s Magazine*, the *World's Work*, and *T.P.'s Weekly*, but in acknowledging my indebtedness to the editors, I doubt whether they could identify them, so completely has the material been recast.—R. R. B.

I

THE BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

DRAMA is the artistic presentation of elemental things. Like human birth the true dramatic conception must spring from the deep and everlasting desire of light and life, the ever-surging resurrection of form from chaos.

Living in a sophisticated period, yet buoyed up with the hope of an age of greater beauty and simplicity, let us consider for a moment the origin of drama. By origin I do not mean merely the beginning of things dramatic in Britain, which led up to our chief glory, Shakespeare, and our widest and noblest period of personal and national expansion, but I allude to the first gleamings of that communal spirit that united men and women in their mutual concept of beauty, and in the physical expression of mutual joy and shared emotion.

We know not where it first sprang to the light any more than we can fix by surveyor's

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

science the exact place where man first beheld woman with conscious love, where first Cain smote Abel with deliberate hate, becoming first a murderer and then, beholding his misdeeds, a solitary poet aghast at the part that he had played.

But when mankind became tribal the daily routine of hunting, of fire and water, of beholding the sun as a god and the stars as shining seraphim, made Life itself a drama, and the visible things of the world emblems of a natural religion.

But when life became complex, when no longer simple toil, love, and hate were the end-all of existence, when death no more fell like a dream, and the inherent waywardness of man led him towards the complicated muddle that we call civilisation, he had to invent something for a diversion: to call to his bard for a song, to his young men and maidens for a dance. Long before the days when religion came to be a thing apart and the arts a luxury or an amusement, in days comparatively simple a gap had appeared between daily life and the dances and songs of tribal religion and enjoyment.

But the point that must be made plain before any conception of the relationship of life and

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

art can be attempted, is that religious song and dance were the first signs of spiritual pleasure among those early peoples whose daily business was one of hunting and war, whose emotions were roughly love and hate. The religion of these folk consisted in the ceremonial worship of the forces of nature and the powers that moved their own passions.

Their life itself was art, because it was true, and truth and pleasure are the bases of all that is noble in art or life.

Lest the reader weary of abstract ideas let him join with me in this search for the true sources of drama.

I propose first to describe simply the origin of drama among a people who stood midway between barbarism on the one hand and what we know as civilisation on the other. I mean the Greeks.

Then I shall ask the reader to follow, in a separate chapter, the main lines of the dramatic development that led to Shakespeare.

From that point we will try to show how the art of Shakespeare was veritably the voice of a people, and how through rekindling the fires of true tribal or folk-art, and rallying round the self-conscious plays of Shakespeare, we have the drama once again in direct touch with

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

the hearty and joyous impulses of life, and need no more be thralls to the superficial and stupid manifestations of a denationalised spirit.

A counterfeit presentation of life will hang upon our heels for all time, but in dealing with the possibilities of our theatre we must look deep into the past before we venture to step confidently into the future.

The cult of Dionysos, the wine-god, grew up in Diacria among farmers and herdsmen. This is very significant in view of the folk-revival of which we shall speak later. And in reading Stuart-Glennie on the more modern folk-songs and customs of Greece, I find that much of this old Dionysian cult has become intertwined with Christianity. But the association of drama with joy is apparent not only at the beginnings of its manifestation, but may be traced through the history of folk-lore, wherever, as in the case in question, we have a more or less connected record. During eleven months of each year, throughout the whole of Attica, the worship of Dionysos took place in dance and song. In all countries, in all civilisations, dance and song have preceded plays and musical compositions. What we know as rhythm, and in a lesser degree

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

rhyme, is simply an imitation of the primal rhythm.

Some say that this primal rhythm was the joy of man in the dance.

Among the Greeks it was held that it was an imitation of the rhythm of Nature itself as expressed by the waves of the sea. At the festivals of Dionysos, especially when they consecrated the wine in autumn, the dances were human enough. To the modern mind they would appear indelicate, as they represented in ceremonial movement not only the harvest and the vintage, but birth and death. Of course they were not indecent, but the simplest and purest forms of dramatic art. Dionysos was surrounded by priests, and each year the wife of the high priest was wedded to the god, a ceremony that was probably the basis of one of our own folk-dances. Also he was supposed to be surrounded by satyrs or goat-like demons, who were personated at festival time by the rustics.

The reader may wonder what all this has to do with Stratford-upon-Avon. Let me warn him that this book is devoted to the explanation not alone of the Festival, which you yourself can describe as well as I, but to a thousand things of deep interest. These may at first

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

appear difficult and disconnected, and I cannot do better than give you the keynote here and now.

Stratford is a town in which old and new meet in Shakespeare. Every good workman, or wife, or artist is conscious that love and labour are holy and happy things. We want to make the world beautiful: to spread ideas. Therefore not only the plays of Shakespeare but every form of beautiful life must flourish here, so that its joyous influence may spread. That is the reason that we have set no narrow limits to the subjects of this discussion. Beginning by tracing the healthy origin of outdoor arts, a wide ground must be covered, and many a digression pardoned. What is true of the origin of dancing is true equally of all art. For any work which does not spring direct from human experience, as a spontaneous expression of pain or pleasure, is bad. It may please the crowd for an hour, but cannot live in the hearts of men.

If we go back to the beginnings of drama, many a guiding idea comes to us. For the early dances were the simple expression of a simple life.

We have a curious side-light upon the age-long use of this dancing. The Homeric period takes us very far back, but the origin of the



Photo by Window & Grove

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS PORTIA

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

Sun-dances of the Red Indians may be traced further.

In Europe, period has succeeded period more rapidly. But North America lay fallow as it were from the Stone Age to the beginning of what is quite modern history. The tale of Poïa, the Star-boy, son of the Morning Star and of an Indian maiden, is older than that of Dionysos and the Greek goat-dancing. And it was Poïa, according to tribal lore, who taught the Sun-dance to a race that knew the folk-wisdom and had kinship with Earth and Sun before any trace can be found of the same thing in Europe.

This does not mean that folk-dancing began in America, because probably the same impulses were at work all over the world.

But it proves beyond any question that folk-dancing was the first communal expression of religious feeling and human joy in life.

The exact process by which dancing became drama can be traced by continuing our view of the Greeks. It is true equally of all races, but not so capable of clear proof, because of the essential difference between the Greek and the Red Indian. Both of them differed from the Briton, who about that time was painted blue.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

These Dionysian Festivals of the Greeks were many, as has been seen. The dances and songs gradually took upon themselves a dramatic shape. Like the old English singing games they were pantomimic, and it remained merely to introduce semi-choruses and groups, and thus to turn them into dramas.

Aristotle tells us, in his "Poetics," that Tragedy and Comedy in their earlier stages were improvisations.

The first definite record of drama may be found in the accounts of Thespis, and his production of plays at Lenæa, under the patronage of Peisistratus, whose interest was divided between town-planning and the drama.

For it was about that time, curiously enough, that the organisation of cities and "town-planning" took a recognisable shape. The marshalling of ideas in art and life occur as a rule simultaneously, practical and ideal acting and reacting upon one another.

This is the case to-day. For the first time in the history of the English Stage its organisation and what may be called its "ideaography" is being debated, while the relation of architecture to civic life is another phase of a national awakening.

These facts throw a new light upon the

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

Shakespearean age, for they help to reveal the true reason why Shakespeare was in touch with the life of his day, while we, as a nation, are only beginning to be. This point must be left, however, for the Shakespearean chapters. One thing must be noticed here. The Elizabethan plays contained characters by the dozen. But not until Aeschylus was a second actor introduced by the Greeks. The Thespian plays were rather choral-dance-charades, with leaders or spokesmen for the chorus, and one actor, who was as it were the narrator, while the chorus provided the commentary.

Sophocles, who was to the Greeks much as was Wagner to the Germans, allowed himself three actors. Also he began the use of painted scenery instead of the ceremonial background.

The nature of that background and of the stage is important, as throwing light upon Shakespeare.

The stage, in three tiers like three keyboards on an organ, was set ceremonially, an altar at the back.

The Gods walked the top stage, the protagonists the second, while the chorus moved upon the third.¹

¹ This is doubted by Mr. C. E. Montague in "Dramatic Values," but I am not yet convinced.—R. R. B.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Contrast this with the Elizabethan theatre, which may or may not have been covered, but almost certainly was flat, abutting into the audience like a prize-ring.

The Greeks allowed no change of scene, also insisting upon unity of time, so that the Greek drama had the intensity of a one-act play.

The free Elizabethan spirit permitted an unlimited variety of scenes, which were portrayed by word-painting and rhetoric.

At the same time I gravely doubt whether in Shakespeare's time there was little or no scenery. Historical accuracy it had not, as the Italian plays of Shakespeare prove. But like Sophocles, Shakespeare would be an innovator and demand scenery, though his requirements would have seemed modest to Sir Herbert Tree. We know that the masques and pageants of the period had scenery.

Another point which Shakespeare no doubt had in common with the Greek dramatists was the use of music, to which I shall refer later.

This question of music in relation to drama is not understood widely.

Having evolved from song and dance the Greek drama continued the tradition. The dance rhythm got into the verse, which, certainly from the time of Aeschylus, was

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

accompanied by music, to which the chorus chanted and danced, and which sustained the voice of the actors.

Therefore we find :—

(a) The drama began as ceremonial song and dance.

(b) Constituted a folk-festival for savages, and, among the Greeks, for peasants.

(c) With the growth of the city became a bond of civic ideals and an incarnation of religious beliefs.

(d) Its form was that of music-drama, in which the various arts were allied.

The reason for this digression is to lead up to the following chapters, in which I shall urge that—

(a) The English folk-drama was a ruder form of art closely akin to the Greek, and arose from dances and songs of pagan worship.

(b) That, being allied with the work of the Church, it became Christian.

(c) That, with the awakening of England, first as a response to European learning, and then owing to the national awakening of the country under Elizabeth, the bucolic drama became merged in the wider and deeper drama of Shakespeare.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

(*d*) That folk-customs and plays never died out, and have survived to this day.

(*e*) That in them we have the forgotten well-spring of English music and drama.

(*f*) These, being in their essence eminently Shakespearean, are worthy of revival beside the great plays.

(*g*) And that the living principle of folk-art calls for modern expression, and provides us with the best hope of a contemporary drama.

It is a good thing that the English drama has lain fallow for so long. For only the best has survived, and we have witnessed and may observe daily the failure of a contemporary stage that aims at external amusement. The first principle of all drama is beauty, and unless a play be a picture, a joy to the eye and ear, the poet cannot venture into depths of meaning, of philosophy or religion.

And that is the reason of the failure of contemporary drama as an art. It can succeed commercially only through frivolity or vulgarity. As soon as it becomes deep it becomes dull.

Whereas folk-art always is profound yet never tires the hearer or the beholder.

In those days Art and Life were in some sort of harmony. With us contemporary drama has no place in our life and thought. In fact

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

very few people have any ideas upon the art of living, and rely upon thoughtless habits. Hence what we call "boredom."

Business men are disorderly and erratic, because commerce is competitive. Men cannot keep their heads level when they are striving to get them above their fellows. The modern market-place is like Donnybrook Fair. On the other hand, the artist is orderly. The painter, the musician, and the poet depend upon harmony in colour, in tone, and in idea. Because the madness of Mammon creates chaos and gloom, one needs the calm and the simplicity of great art. And to produce good work the artist must be erect, not scrambling on all-fours for pennies. If we get out of London on a horse-'bus we find ourselves on solid earth beneath the open sky. Here we may begin to study the Greeks, not with a guide-book in the Parthenon, but "right here," as the Americans say. Our Meteorological Office is a scientific institution. With the Greeks it would have been a temple to Athena. They worshipped the earth as Demeter, the mother, unchanging in her love, and Athena as goddess of air. Athena was a young woman, for the weather was full of feminine wiles and whims, even beneath the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

beams of Apollo, who was the sun-god. Greek mythology was the presentation of scientific fact and religious belief under the beautiful disguise of fairy tales.

There can be no doubt that the Greek ideals proceeded from the Homeric Age. Then all was primal and elemental. Man was a hero in close contact with Neptune the sea-god, and the harpies evil spirits of the air. On him the beams of Apollo shone, and the breath of Athena, giving him strength for his mighty labours. Civilisation did not with them destroy these ideas of gods and men. In our own case, primitive conceptions have become sophisticated. We have ethics, sociology, art, dogma, all separated and controlled by committees and managers. The Greeks built up their religion from Nature. Science added to their lore. Poets were subconsciously religious, because their poems and dramas, even their dances, were conceived as illustrations of religious truths. The priest and the artist hewed their stone from the same elemental quarries. In modern England the censorship taboos plays drawn from the Scriptures. Public opinion regards a religious novel as in bad taste. Therefore the expressions of priest, poet, and politician are addressed to different publics, and harmony

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

between pleasure, instruction, and statecraft is unknown.

In Greece, religion and life itself were expressed and contained in the drama. In England, in pre-Shakespearean days, the Church held and controlled religious conception, and the English stage actually grew from the Church, as will be seen in the next chapter. The Church and Stage were in close relation before Shakespeare's day. The task of his immediate predecessors, and of himself, was to render it popular and national.

And that is why, in pleading for a more consistent attitude to folk-art, I am compelled to compare the Greek with the British way of looking at things.

Of religion as we know it the Greeks had no idea. Sin was a meaningless term to them. "Thou shalt not" would have proved an incentive, for liberty rather than the restraint of duty lay at their core and centre. Their view of Pan illustrated this point. Music to the Greeks was a culture. It included music in which word and thought lead, while Apollo's lyre fills them with the sun's own light. The works of Sophocles and the dramatists belonged to this kind, for they were more music-dramas than plays. In our own day Elgar's

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

"Gerontius" is typical. Below this level they reckoned work in which the intellectual or the brutal predominated, in Elgar's "Kingdom," and in brutal works of genius such as "Paggiacci." Below this again, they set merely sensuous tone-painting, played mostly on Doric flutes. These were the pipes of Pan, whose cult has begun again in artistic circles. The root of Pan-worship lies in the belief that the gratification of the senses is to be desired up to a certain limit. It is a wholesome antidote to asceticism, though the Greeks knew what they were about in setting Pan beneath Demeter, Athena, and Apollo—a mere flute-player on the mountain of the gods.

The British idea of unity is an Empire on which the sun never sets. The Greek ideal of a State was of an organic city, on which the sun set every evening with perfect regularity and beauty. Athens was about the size of a large provincial town, and Plato thought that its population of one hundred thousand rendered it unwieldy. Each man was a citizen, taking a direct and personal part in the corporate life. The very word "politics" implies "city-craft." That is to say, Athens was more an ideal limited company, with directors, shareholders, and employees, than a go-as-you-please

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

conglomeration of units, who only come into contact with the community when they collide with the rate-collector or fall into the clutches of a policeman. The Greeks were aristocrats ; their philosophers intelligent clubmen rather than "dons" or professors. They employed slaves to do manual work and for productive labour, not that they might sit in idleness, but to give time for the art of life.

Another reason for the simple, organic health of Athens lay in the opposite direction. The individual had a standard of conduct. Not only was there a clear conception of the ideal state as a city, but the Greeks lived up to their gods. Apollo sprang from imagination, it is true. But he was the dream of a perfect manhood, at once an idol and an example. The gymnasium was not a place for acrobatic display, but a haunt of philosophers and their school of followers. Nor did they alone exercise their tongues and their wits, but also their bodies. If we can imagine an amalgam of, say Mr. Frederic Harrison and Mr. Sandow, we have a fair picture of the nobler Greek. The Olympic games were held in honour of Zeus, the all-father. Sacrifice, prayer, and choral hymn took their places in what was really a great play. Nude, for the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

most part, the athletes were symbols of god-like strength and striving. The prize was not a purse, but a laurel crown. The victor's triumph lay not in the raucous applause of a rabble, but in an ode by one whose hand could hurl a discus, whose heart was unafraid of battle. They worshipped the Earth-mother in the strength of Athena, and in their nobility raised up man as Apollo in glory, even as the evil hearts of men had crucified him as Christ.

From whatever point of view one regarded the Greeks, their ideas and their religion were mirrored in the drama. The dramatist then, and to some extent the actor, were more than the priests of a religion. In a degree they were its creators.

What then is the God-bestowed gift that enables a man to reveal, as Sophocles or Shakespeare, the soul of a people?

The dramatist, as distinguished from the mere playwright, the dramatic pedestrian, is an artist who is at one with the universe and at war with himself.

A deep unrest, coupled with a broad faith and poetic vision, gave Shakespeare to us, Dante to Italy, Goethe and Wagner to Germany.

The dramatist may be Christian or Pagan,

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

but to be a maker of great dramas he must deal with huge ideas and great simplicities, unhampered by partialities or prejudices. His Tragedy must be charged with that strange tense feeling which comes to us on waking from some terrible dream. His Comedy must have the comprehensive wit of one who knows both the rose and her thorns.

The quality nearest to the heart of Man is Beauty, and it is from the hues of the rainbow that he must draw his colour, from the sounds of the air his music, from the green garment of the earth his scene, and from man himself the voice.

The dramatist has to inspire this setting of nature with his human message. The man to whom it is given to harness sound and scene and sense has surely within him the power to draw mankind to some worthy place.

The means employed will vary according to the age in which the dramatist lives; and climate, religion, laws, and customs each will bear a part.

The technical questions of music, painting, and the other arts are also of the greatest importance in discussing the nature of drama. It is generally admitted nowadays that the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

drama is the fittest form, and the most fully evolved means, for conveying the work of an artist to an audience. Theatrical affairs have not of late years maintained the dramatist in the position of honour which once was an uncontested right.

Assuming that the stage is a great frame in which can be set up a picture, actually living and moving, and granted that the poetic and musical arts can sound all the harmonies of nature, it follows that he who uses these means to their full compass can produce an effect on the emotions and senses impossible in any other way.

The creative impulse presupposes a view of life, and since impersonal ideas cannot be rendered visible it is necessary to clothe them in flesh. Just as the life-value—physical and spiritual—of parents is clothed in the fleshly body of the child, so must the persons of a play embody the ideas, the life-value of the dramatist. His means will vary; his outlook on life, the preponderance of certain gifts, natural bias towards tragedy or comedy, will shape his development as an artist, but one thing alone will mark him great.

If his art be like a flame that burns up the smallness of man's motives, if his wit can

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

disperse his musty opinions and make him a hearty, emotional human it is well, and the means are not important.

Nevertheless it is the intention of this book to advocate a fuller development of our drama, especially on its musical and folk festival side, and to explain this technical evolution. And in using the term "musical" let it be said at once that it is this quality in Shakespeare that makes him supreme. He does not use words for mere argument, but as Beethoven uses sound. And it is because all the arts seem to have come together in Shakespeare that he is to be taken as the very centre of the Merrie England Movement.

In the great days of the Greek drama its first function was ceremonial and religious. It was the ritual of a human religion, whose tenets were emotional, just as the ritual of a modern Church is the ceremonial of divine or revealed belief.

In the days of the Shakespeare Revival—the Renaissance, if you will—the drama was the popular festival, the holiday feast of a lusty nation, clean of mind and limb.

To-day he would be a bold man who dare attempt to define in a phrase the relation of our drama to life.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The two subjects are divided, though we strive to bring them together.

The whole tendency of an advanced civilisation is overwork and specialism on the one hand, and overplay and idleness on the other.

In Germany Bayreuth keeps alive a national spirit, centring around Wagner.

Oberammergau holds the Festival of the Passion. Festivals of a purely musical kind are held in cathedral cities and great manufacturing centres. But nowhere have all these things come together. The man of leisure can travel and obtain them for himself.

But they have never been brought together in one place. Their value depends upon three qualities.

They give pleasure, and a dramatic festival combines the advantages of a country holiday with the enjoyment of the theatre.

All great art is national and religious in origin, therefore a bond between men of the same blood.

The laughter and pity of the human soul are universal and cosmic, therefore common ground for men and women of all creeds or races.

Everything at Stratford is English to the core, but not insular. It appeals to the Anglo-Celt, in fact to the whole Aryan race.



Photo by W. & D. Downey

SIR HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE AS HAMLET

BEGINNINGS OF FOLK-ART

Beginning from Shakespeare the scope of the Festival has extended, and it is the purpose of this book to show that the drama is but a focussing of the soul upon interesting things. And the more bound up with the varied interests of life the more we need a common expression of our national spirit in Festival and Song. And if in this book we go beyond the intentions or scope of the Governors' wishes, let it not be imputed to us for evil.

This book is the expression of that non-political but progressive spirit that is giving the country new ideas in art and life. And all these new ideas are as old as the hills. Therein lies the need for drama. In the works of the great sages the universal wisdom and inspiration of the people lie sleeping. When you are downtrodden and oppressed a world's pity is yours, and your heavy hours may be lightened by laughter. Our pride and peculiarities receive the lash of comedy, and our brotherhood with all men is made plain in folk-plays and the song and dance of the folk.

II

THE ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

WE have seen how primitive song and dance revealed primal and elemental feeling, and how among the Greeks these things developed into a religious art expressive of the beliefs and ideas of the people. And in Greek folk-song to this day one may trace the interweaving of Hellenic and Christian conceptions. In these examples of peasant art, which are moreover the groundwork of modern literature in Athens, the words Olympos and Bethlehem appear in close proximity.

The connection is not so clearly defined in our own literature, but the developments are quite as interesting.

It is wrong to suppose that the Elizabethan age produced Shakespeare. However lusty, brave, and imaginative a period may be, genius is individual.

Had Shakespeare lived at the time of Boadicea, he would have been a chanting bard leading armies, and calls to "Lay on,"

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

or "To be or not to be?" would have sounded on the field and at the war council.

Had he been contemporary with Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus, "Macbeth" would have been a one-act play, with no change of scene, and it would have been filled with references to many gods. As it is, Banquo's ghost, the "trees of Birnam wood," and the witches, are far from Greek in conception. Witches and ghosts are English to the tips of their broomsticks and the depths of their shadows. Walking trees would have been unthinkable in so orderly and philosophic a place as Athens.

Once indicate the nature of the pre-Shakespeare drama, and we have the key to the whole situation.

The English drama came into being through the Church. Among savages such an institution did not exist, while in Athens it was identical with the theatre. The temples of the gods were for sacrifice: the theatre for dramatic rites and worship.

In mediæval England the Mass stood to the people as an expression of divine things. But, being in Latin, the religious rites required popular interpretation and found it in the play. When Bibles were unknown, and later when

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

they were scarce, the clergy became actors, the elder taking the men's parts and young men the women's. And it is interesting to note that the drama of Japan had a similar origin and nature, and that women likewise were at that time debarred from dramatic work. These biblical plays had their origin in very remote ages. Shortly after the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem the absence of the usual worship was met with a play in Greek. Though the writer was a Jew named Ezekiel, it is significant to us that the language of Hellas was used. Its origin was classic rather than Jewish.

But English drama, if in this sense Greek in origin, has been from the first a product of the folk. Whether in song or dance or the early biblical plays, or Shakespeare's own works, it comes from the soil.

In France the opposite has been the case. Racine and Corneille based their works on classic models. All such attempts in this country have led to failure.

The dramatic instincts of Christians had gone to the building up of a ritual. The life and sacrifice of Christ provided the basis of a system of symbolism, expressed in action and by Latin words.

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

What could be more natural than to make the meaning clear to an unlettered peasantry through acted scenes either in the church itself or in the churchyard?

The great festivals were of course Christmas and Easter. Easter had been a pagan feast, and it actually happened that the flowers offered in the old Floralia, or again in the Northern worship of Freia, were devoted as an Easter offering to the risen Christ.

Some writers believe that the fact that our Christian festivals are, in nearly every case, grafted upon some old pagan ceremony, robs them of their original and sacred nature. But I rejoice to think that each offering that we make has not only its divine but its human significance: that when I remember the bounty of the Giver at harvest-time I am not unmindful of Erda, the Earth-mother, in whom I have community with the folk, with those who are dead, or alive, or who yet are to be. I have kinship with every man or woman who says "Our Father," who in any way believes in the brotherhood of man.

The dramas of "The Three Maries" and of "The Descent into Hell" were among the first of their kind. The former was known in the tenth century, while the latter is mentioned

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

in "Piers Plowman." Of "The Descent" we have records. On Easter Eve a procession was formed outside the church. Approaching one of the doors a character representing Christ knocked. The guardian or porter of hell sought to dissuade him from entering. But at last the Master, victorious, broke through and burst the gates.

On Easter Monday a similar charade or parable took place, dealing with the walk to Emmaus.

The early play of "The Three Kings" at first was a simple ceremonial for Christmas in which the kings standing on the altar steps greeted the new-born babe. The way in which these works developed explains the power of a Church which, despite Roman ritual, appealed to the national and human character of the people at a time when the peasantry and many of the nobility could not write. This was no case of blind superstition, as some suppose, but of a human and national form of religion supplementing the mystic and sacramental. This early art was popular because it grew out of the folk. The play of "The Three Maries" was built up until it included a dramatic concept of Herod and his doings. In a MS. of 1060 the part is written down. He

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

is portrayed as a bombastic and opinionated fellow, subject to brain storms and maniacal temper. Hence Shakespeare's allusion in "Hamlet" to those who "out-Herod Herod." And the Herod of "Salome" is revealed by Richard Strauss to-day as the neurotic scion of a degenerate race.

Characterisation such as this was bound to burst the boundary wall of illustrated scripture.

Though they ceased to be part of the actual services of the Church, an intimate relationship continued. The Mysteries were plays dealing with the Scriptures, while Miracle plays were based upon the lives of the saints. The first of the latter was said to have been written by a Benedictine nun, Hroswitha. Though a German, living in the reign of Otto the Great, in Saxony, she wrote in Latin. About 1125 Hilarius was writing Latin plays with occasional lapses into the common speech. He was an Englishman who studied under Abelard, and his plays included works on Darius and David, "The Raising of Lazarus," and, of course, a nativity play, "St. Nicholas."

"It was performed on the Feast of the Saint, when an actor was dressed to represent the image of St. Nicholas, and stood in a niche

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

in the church. To the shrine came a wealthy heathen who, before taking a journey, committed his treasure to the keeping of the Saint. But thieves entered, and on the heathen's return the Saint stood guardian over a rifled hold. Furious, he took a whip and lashed the image, which thereupon assumed life, descended, and accusing the robbers, bade them restore their plunder. As all are amazed at this marvel, lo, the inanimate image is once more silent stone, the Saint himself appears, and preaches Christ. The whole is typical of the mediæval mind, which not only creates what it desires, but equally eliminates what displeases it."¹

The whole point of true dramatic art lies in that last sentence. As Wagner put it, the artist creates for himself a vision of the future and longs to be contained therein. Or better, let us create an ideal concept of life in the present, and let our practical, matter-of-fact nation see to it that everyday life is up to the standard of our dreams. Of course, the modern dramatist, with a few exceptions, aims at nothing but "striking situations." Neither he nor the manager, nor the poor, patient

¹ "English Miracle Plays," by E. Hamilton Moore. (Sherratt and Hughes.)

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

public take the thing seriously, and even the jokes are painfully evolved to "bring down the house." So that the "patient playgoer" of to-day would have been very much at sea in the Middle Ages when people took things cheerfully and seriously.

When one looks at the childhood of the Middle Ages one fears that our own period is one of "middle age."

This was going on all over Europe. Bohemia had its Sepulchre plays, with a prayer for the welfare of the folk. For the emotion was national as well as religious. The Passion Play of Oberammergau alone has survived, if we except the "Punch and Judy" show, which of course is a corrupt version of the play of "Pontius Pilate." By "corrupt" I mean no offence, for never do I miss a chance of witnessing this ancient diversion.

One feature about these old plays, which seems to me of the greatest importance, is that they were played by communities representing trades and occupations. For in modern times the stage has become so remote from actuality that not only are the events without meaning and the dialogue without inspiration, but the actors are, for the most part, competitive specialists, taking no interest save in their

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

own professional skill and the consequent applause and pay. The play of "Noah's Deluge" was performed most appropriately by the water-leaders and drawers of the Dee, not by a number of isolated units, who knew more about grease-paints than water.

The barbers and wax-chandlers of Chester did a work in which appeared "God, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Melchisedec." Why they did this I cannot say, but they would be the better barbers for it, and their candles would burn as brightly.

The shepherds of Wakefield did a Nativity play, which is a delightful example of a quality which is the great glory of folk-art. It combines rustic buffoonery with true religious feeling. The shepherds were Yorkshire peasants, and, though the author probably was a monk, the transition from Wakefield to Bethlehem has the simple inevitability of a game played by children.

Turning to the Coventry Cycle, one finds the shearmen engaged in a Nativity play. The prophet Isaiah is the Prologue, who, in a manner by no means unworthy of Isaiah, sets out his prophecy. This in the natural sequence is fulfilled by the Angel Gabriel. From this point the play is full of interest and beauty,

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

though the rustic humour of the Yorkshire shepherds is lacking. And we cannot but believe that the people were nearer to God and to the humour and mystery of life in those days. Popular amusement was based upon Truth, upon the setting forth of vital ideas in dramatic form.

By the end of the fourteenth century the English countryside was alive with drama, though it is very regrettable that Wycliffe and the "reformers" stood out against a freedom of religious expression which of course should have appealed to their own zeal. In fact, any shortcomings of their own deeds, and the narrowness that led to so bitter a religious struggle, may be set down to a certain lack of broad humanity in their attitude to the freedom of the early drama. The cause must have suffered, and certainly the drama fell into decay.

The Corpus Christi Festival often was a national ceremony, as when Richard II. beheld the plays at York in 1397. The feast certainly tended to become a mere revel, and to restore the true nature of Corpus Christi, on the 10th of June 1426, the Mayor, Peter Buckley, and the citizens of York decreed that the Sacramental procession should take place

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

on the vigil of the feast, and the play should be performed on the actual day. This proves, I think, that the original nature of English drama, like the Greek, was religious, and that in separating Church and Stage a foolish step was taken.

The last performance of this York Cycle took place in 1584, and it was in 1588 that Shakespeare wrote "Love's Labour Lost."

The link between these early national plays and the labours of the Elizabethans is unbroken. The original MSS. of the York plays was in all probability destroyed by Archbishop Grindal, though Queen Elizabeth gave every encouragement to the playwright and to nobles who were willing to act as patrons to the Art of Drama.

The outstanding note of the period was the unity of all classes where plays were concerned. Being thoroughly popular, they were, in the absence of the press, veritable "chronicles of the times."

For many years the lost art of the Mysteries and Moralities lingered in Cornwall. There, in open-air theatres, plays of the Creation, the Passion, and the Resurrection were performed to a people to whom the modern theatre of Shakespeare was unknown. They were more

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

mythical in conception and broader in dramatic resource than those of the other cycles. And there is every reason to suppose that anti-phonal hymns on the lines of the Greek chorus were used. This means that quite a large body of the people took part, as in the modern choral society, a fact worth remembering when we consider the relation of modern choral art to the stage.

The various Craft Guilds continued their religious plays even when Protestantism had effectively censored Roman Catholic works, thus maintaining a catholicity apart from any definite party.

The folk, being by nature dramatic, would not give up a source of inspiration so full of pleasure and self-expression.

It was inevitable that the Elizabethan theatre, centring at the Globe and Blackfriars in London, but taking root also at the houses and castles of nobles all over the country, should to some extent curb the creative spirit of the folk-play. The revival of the Elizabethan stage was a forward step that naturally left much that was good in the lurch.

But not only was the folk-play overshadowed. The classical models had been followed by those to whom European travel and culture had

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

revealed the possibilities of polite art. And naturally the nobles and elegants who tried to imitate the classics without the genius of the old authors, provided a very cold dish for dilettanti and dabblers.

However crude the folk-plays were, and they were not nearly so unskilful as might be supposed, they have retained an interest and vitality to this day. Were I to record the doings of the "classicist" school the reader of to-day would lose patience.

The secular drama of Shakespeare broke in like a "sou'-wester." I am not at all sure whether the victory was not too complete, and that the old Craft Guild plays should not be revived, as indeed has been the case with "Everyman" revivals. Perhaps it would be better to start again from the beginning, on the lines of the modern village plays.

A careful study of their possibilities would form part of the literary adviser's work, at the Memorial Theatre, were any such policy decided upon by the Governors.

For a musical quality may be found in these old plays, a feature seldom mentioned by those whose business it should be to reveal the natural beauties of our arts. I have believed for a long time that the finest work could never

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

be popular so long as it remained merely literary, musical, or pictorial.

The literary tradition of Shakespeare almost succeeded in banishing him from the theatre to the schoolroom and lecture-hall.

On the other hand the qualities of music and dance appeal strongly to the people. When these qualities are absent from the drama popular interest is driven away. The public never were or ever can be interested in art unless in some way they come into touch with human and festive conditions.

Until for the purposes of this study I looked fairly closely into the matter I did not know to what an extent history had repeated itself. If we look at these old dramas not only is dramatic action and song present in a simple form, but the very setting of them, in churches or in the open air, forces us back to nature and simplicity of stage-craft. Simple realism upon the stage is right. A restful scene, or the symbolism of a church, the essentially English character of a scene in the garden of a castle, brings back the modern stage-manager from the amazing uselessness of an elaborate setting in which no one has the faintest belief.

The only exception to this is, of course, pageantry, a form of display that does not aim

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

at spectacular realism, but at generous and romantic festivity.

This union of the arts in their simplest forms, for the pleasure of the people, is the peculiar glory of Stratford, and is destined in ever greater degree to be her contribution to the world-history of the stage. This the critics are beginning to observe, and the research of scholars reveals the beginning of the movement in pre-Shakespearean days.

In the chapters upon Shakespeare I shall show how musical were his devices, and how essentially scenic his conceptions, that his particular form of art lay midway between the eternal rightness of the primitive folk-drama and the wider developments which led to the modern music drama.

Scholars like Mr. Sidney Lee, and special pleaders on the lines of Mr. Frank Harris, have done their best to explain Shakespeare. But the stumbling-block always has been that the people have not met them half-way, as would have been the case had simpler forms of drama, and a general conception of the interplay of the arts, put them into close touch with his idiom.

For instance, whenever songs occur in a Shakespearean work, the action stops dead,



Photo by L. Caswall Smith

MISS GENEVIEVE WARD AS VOLUMNIA

DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

and a virtuoso display takes place. Then the drama ambles on.

Yet if we look at "Childermas Day," a miracle play done in the year 1512, a musical epilogue followed, which either was a choral dance or led up to a dance in which the audience joined. Thus the gulf was bridged between audience and player, much as is the case with Miss Neal's folk-dances.

Of course this could not be done in the regular theatre, though the spirit of it would bind the player and audience more closely. Children were trained to sing in these plays so that music must have been an integral part of them.

These children also took part in the acting, a most human influence both for the children and the drama. The late Mr. Goddard assured us that in "The Adoration of the Shepherds" (in the Towneley collection of plays) part-singing was used.

Therefore we have authority in advocating the union of the arts, and in setting up an ideal of the theatre much wider than that of the specialised spoken play. It will be seen later that Shakespeare's art is above all rhapsodic, and a form of song, inasmuch as all the essential features of folk-art are to be found in

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

his dramas, richer and more sonorous, more pliable and fluent, but not to be confused with classical verse, nor their golden coinage to be debased by the silver of stilted declamation, nor the tinsel of realistic display.

III

CONCERNING WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

OUR century is the high tide of the personal equation. And for that reason I want the reader to enter into a conspiracy. Let us imagine that we have just discovered Shakespeare; that his works have been banished from the stage and his name forgotten. Then let us discuss his personality and his accomplishments. By this I cast no slur upon critical scholarship, which has taught us many things. Without such men as Sidney Lee, the late Dr. Furnival, Edward Dowden, Israel Gollancz, and others; and without the band of Extension lecturers, we should not have the educational forces of the world on the side of popular drama. Shakespeare might, like Marlowe, Chapman, Dekker, Ben Jonson, and Tourneur, be cut off from the traffic of the stage. Happily the scholar has not shunned the playwright.

And in dealing with the personal aspect

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

of the man, I shall be forced to rely somewhat upon Mr. Frank Harris, who is at war with the professors. The reason that I do so is simple. Harris has emphasised the humanity of Shakespeare, and we owe him thanks for that.

Most of us believe that Shakespeare was himself; a number of people think that he was Bacon; and a very select circle are quite sure that he was the Duke of Rutland. To Sir Edwin Durning Lawrence, William Shakespeare was an illiterate fool, who lent his name to a gentleman who produced literature of a peculiarly streaky variety. But the certainty of the Baconian has met its match in Mr. Harris, whose book, "The Man Shakespeare," deals boldly with the personal possibilities of the poet.

In my summary of his life, in my suggestions as to the possible motives of his works, I am indebted to him and to the late Thomas Tyler, who spent many years in tracing the fable and fact of the poet's career.

He was the son of John Shakespeare, dealer in leather, meat, and skins, at Stratford-upon-Avon. Succeeding in business, John married Mary Arden, who was of a well-known old Catholic family. In 1568 John Shakespeare

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

became bailiff of Stratford, and during his year of office encouraged visiting companies of actors. That was four years after the birth of their first son, William, who was born on April 23,¹ 1564. He had free education at Stratford Grammar School, and at the age of thirteen began to work for his father, who was in financial straits. His Latin and Greek probably were small, but, at the same time, not less than that of the popular actor or dramatist of to-day. By 1586 his father's ruin was complete, and William Shakespeare, according to Rowe, ran wild among companions as idle as himself. But they were active upon occasion, and the old tale of the poet's prosecution by Sir Thomas Lucy for deer-stealing is a probable one. So far the dramatist's training had been admirable. Poverty, low companions, and irregular schooling are better bases for creative literature than a strictly academic career.

It is customary to regard a certain coarseness that one finds in Shakespeare as characteristic of the period. A study of Lyly and the Euphuists fails to bear this out. The polite literature of the day was polite. The Queen, the men of action, and the modern school

¹ This, though certainly the day of his death, probably is the birthday also.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

of playwrights beginning with Marlowe, were rough and outspoken in speech, and in action unrestrained. So was Shakespeare at the beginning of his career, and only towards the end do we find his rude joy in life and speech becoming mellowed by age and suffering. He was like Nature herself, full of the impulse of Spring, the prodigality of generous Summer, the deeper tints of Autumn. An early death prevented the cold of Winter from chilling his blood or frosting the ripe fruit of his genius.

Concerning his marriage various opinions have been set forth. But the most probable is that the Hathaway wedding was a mistake that drove the poet in upon himself and made a man of him.

On November 27, 1582, the Bishop of Worcester signed a licence for a marriage between William Shakespeare and Anne Whately. Two farmers, Sandell and Richardson, bound themselves in a surety of £40 to safeguard the Bishop in case of a "just cause or impediment." This was forthcoming, inasmuch as Shakespeare was compelled to substitute Anne Hathaway, with whom he had become entangled, for Anne Whately, whom his free will had sought. In a word, the marriage licence held good, but there was a

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

change in the bride. On May 26, 1583, a daughter was born to them, but the marriage was unhappy. In "Twelfth Night" Shakespeare gives one key to the trouble:

"Let still the woman take
An elder than herself; so wears she to him."

Shakespeare required a wife whom he could mould, and a youth of eighteen finds it hard to drive a woman of twenty-six. In 1585, following close upon the birth of twins, Shakespeare left Anne and Stratford, nor did he return until some ten years later. Evidently the poet determined to be free at all costs, and for ever.

The nature of his domestic troubles may be surmised by comparison with another great dramatist of similar aims and scope.

Having closely examined the abundant evidence in the case of Wagner and his unhappy first marriage, I should be inclined to say that Anne Hathaway, like Minna Pläner, had a way most trying to a young egoistic artist such as Shakespeare no doubt was.

Though the evidence is scanty, it is clear that the poet left Stratford for London, and that his wife did not accompany him.

When Shakespeare was twenty-three "a

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

company of actors, under the nominal patronage of the Queen and Lord Leicester, visited Stratford." Burbage was in it, and would no doubt discuss the question of London, which would have great attractions for an unsettled young man. There is a story to the effect that Shakespeare ran away, held horses at the Blackfriars Theatre, and became a playwright in the intervals between holding horses.

That he should not at once come to his own, that a hack playwright like Greene should describe him as "Shake-scene," is not surprising. He came to know the theatre in every phase and feature by practical experience. But it was probably to his early poems that he looked for success, and only gradually realised what an instrument the free stage of Elizabeth might be for a new kind of art. For Shakespeare was, for a time at least, the Richard Strauss of England, which accounts for his slow progress. In this day, when half the art of Shakespeare is clouded beneath fustian, the symphonic character of his construction is lost. Yet never could he have been so utterly wasted as this story suggests.

It is improbable for several reasons. Shakespeare was a member of a good family. Until his father lost his money, which probably was

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

due to religious persecution, the Shakespeares were well-to-do. And then the Ardens were among the most important people of the county. Of sound burgher stock on the one hand, and something better on the maternal side of the family, it is unlikely that William Shakespeare, however out of favour, would have gone to town without introductions. And to a man of his abilities it is not likely that his friends would allot menial work. Who were those friends?

One of them would be Ralph Hewins, a governor of the Virginia Company. Indeed it was a descendant of this gentleman, Mr. W. A. S. Hewins, who reminded me of a fact easily forgotten by writers of the present day. Under the old highway system, at each parish a vagabond might be detained in the house of correction, and had William Shakespeare run away without money or credentials, his career would have been dramatic in another sense. So that Shakespeare came to London as most men come, with some sort of prospects.

Whether he came as a recruit with Burbage, or later, armed with letters of introduction, does not matter.

That Ralph Hewins would be available in case of need cannot be proved. But it is a

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

fact that members of the families of Sandell and Richardson, the names of the witnesses to Shakespeare's marriage, appear in the Bretforton Parish Register (British Museum) as witnesses to Hewins' wills. This forms some sort of link.

Both the Ardens and the Hewins (which word, by the way, has more than eighty variations of spelling, Euens, &c.) were Catholic families. Ralph Hewins, too, was a cousin of Sir G. Calvert (first Lord Baltimore), and was connected through Virginia Company business with the Earl of Southampton. The adventurous spirit of the age struck home. Without the vivid interest so early kindled by the colonising skill of the people, "The Tempest" might never have received so fair a setting. With men of mark to aid him in case of need Shakespeare no doubt joined the theatrical profession low down. But he entered by the stage door, and did not stand with the horses. Probably he began as actor, and gradually found occasion to show his qualities as an adapter of plays.

This preoccupation with the practical business of the stage had a singular result. As a rule the man who at an early age comes into touch with the theatre becomes a part of the

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

machinery, accepts its traditions, and ceases to think for himself.

But, looking at Shakespeare's beginnings, what do we find?

In "Love's Labour Lost," produced in 1588, and therefore the first of his dramas, the scene opens thus, as the King, Biron, and the others enter :—

King. Let Fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live registered upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death ;
When, spite of cormorant devouring time,
The endeavour of this present breath may buy
That honour, which shall bate his scythe's keen
edge,
And make us heirs of all eternity."

Now take any pre-Shakespearean play. Many of them begin with prologues. "Gorboduc," by Norton and Sackville, leads off with an allegorical pantomime, accompanied by music. Marlowe opens "Tamburlaine" thus :—

" I find myself aggrieved
Yet insufficient to express the same,
For it requires a great and thundering speech !"

Shakespeare begins his first play with a speech about Fame, just as Wagner, in his

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

early opera, "Rienzi," sets forth with blare and blaze. It was not until I had copied these lines that I discovered that the identical passage had struck Mr. Harris, though he had not seen fit to take the comparison further.

Now nearly all these dramatists began either with a descriptive speech (in lieu of elaborate scenery), or dumb show. Marlowe believes in a "thundering speech," but Shakespeare begins on the personal note, and develops musically.

If you care to look at the opening speeches of Shakespeare's plays, he always opens in this way.

By "musically" I mean that he leads off, not with a wordy description or a piece of dumb show in the manner of his time, but strikes a chord, as it were, from which he develops gradually. We hear a great deal about the looseness of construction of the plays as compared with their rich value in thought. This is not the case at all. Shakespeare was first of all a musician by temperament—not a logician. He had many threads of ideas weaving themselves amongst his pages, as in the "scores" of a Wagner or Strauss.

Now Mr. Harris has noted this philosophic thread. Wrongly, in my opinion, he attributes this to the dramatist's weaving of personal

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

autobiographical details into the woof of his plays.

Of course a man must draw upon his own consciousness for his ideas, but at least as many of those ideas will be imaginary as actual records.

When Hamlet bade Ophelia "Get thee to a nunnery," he was evincing the feeling that all literary men experience when love hinders their work. He was not necessarily recording a similar scene in an actual love affair of his own.

Shakespeare had come to know life in every phase at a period of intellectual activity, of national and artistic renaissance. Therefore he was not satisfied to write mechanical, exciting plays, but sought, perhaps instinctively, to colour them. And this colour took two forms. His ideas upon life are woven like many coloured strands of silk through a tapestry upon which his action is portrayed boldly. And the wealth of verbal music apparent in his early poems, such as "Venus and Adonis," is the musical medium by which the fabric is made all of one piece.

There has been much talk of this structural looseness. But, viewed from this standpoint, there is none. The charge vanishes. Once admit that Shakespeare used word and scene

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

musically, the existence of a plain matter-of-fact drama of brief talk and quick action no longer need be demanded.

As well might one cut out the music of an opera and leave only the words and action. That is what I mean by the symphonic use of words—a simultaneous development of the body of the play and its soul—the “play beyond the play.”

This gives at once the secret of Shakespeare’s power to please the child and charm the scholar, to feast the eye and ear and at the same time to satisfy the soul.

By this means his characters are developed so that, without undue explanation or use of allegory, each is a type or symbol, from Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, to Falstaff, Polonius, Caliban, Prospero, Beatrice, Benedict, and Jaques.

If proof be needed of a quality apparent in the plays, it is to be found in his attitude to music.

Take the lines of “Twelfth Night” :—

“ If Music be the food of Love, play on ;
Give me excess of it, that surfeiting
The appetite may sicken and so die.
That strain again ; it had a dying fall :
Oh, it came o’er my ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets.”

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

Not only does Shakespeare write about music ; he hears it, and fain would make his words more than words becoming orchestral. Thus he writes words which have no sense, no practical meaning, save the conjuring up of a musical mood.

In his day, when chamber music among the rich and folk-songs everywhere were common, his audience would realise the suggestion. Therefore, at his great lyrical moments, instead of working up to a situation and bringing down the curtain with a bang, he wafts this alluring spell of suggested music. In "The Tempest" :—

" This music crept by me upon the waters
Allaying both their fury and their passion,
With its sweet air."

In early plays such as "Much Ado About Nothing" songs are introduced. And in "The Tempest," when the master had reached the point at which we may do "what we will," Ariel trips the earth.

My case is proved, so I will pass briefly to the one remaining quality of Shakespeare, which is not as a rule recognised—his mysticism. There is nothing decadent about the man, nor does he stop at a general recognition

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

of God such as, in all ages, satisfies the general body of men, including dramatic authors.

The Ardens were Catholics, and the fact of John Shakespeare's financial straits, at a period in history when well-found burgesses did not lose their position suddenly, points to religious persecution in his case. For it was no time of toleration.

Shakespeare probably did not take any risks. His mystical allusions and reference to prayers (as in Desdemona's death scene) are never exclusively Catholic, but they are not the reflections of a plain "unsuperstitious man." Just about that time the Rosicrucians were making themselves felt, and it was said that Bacon was among their earliest inquirers. Not only the Catholic but the Lutheran type of Nonconformist was a mystic. Therefore the universal and godly mysticism of Shakespeare was in keeping with the popular feeling at its best.

And if this theory be sound, coupled with the idea of musical development, it accounts for the quality of his plays. Where he is not dominated by one or other of these qualities, music and mysticism, he is given to platitude as are all Englishmen.

"To be or not to be, that is the question?"



Photo by W. & D. Downey

MR. J. FORBES-ROBERTSON AS HAMLET AND MISS GERTRUDE
ELIOT AS OPHELIA

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

is common alike to the lover or the stock-broker. "Is she the one woman?" "What will Wall Street do?" Many of his famous utterances have this direct simplicity of the non-committal Englishman.

His reverence for law and order, his evident delight in pageantry and Court life, would never have set him beside Goethe and above Dante, with Beethoven and akin to Wagner.

Faith, not slavish but ingrained, and Love, not sentimental but passionate—even lawless—have moulded for us a man, who is an instrument in spherul Hands.

What was this love of his? After leaving Stratford his relations with his wife were broken. In his will his "second best bed" alone was left to her. The explanation has been sought in Mary Fitton, the Dark Lady of the Sonnets.

Mary Fitton was the second daughter of Sir Edward Fitton, of Gawsworth, Cheshire. In 1595 she was one of the maids of honour to Queen Elizabeth, at whose Court she made a great stir. In 1600, Lord Herbert, son of the Earl of Worcester, married another maid of honour. The Queen attended the ceremony, and Mary Fitton took part in the masque that followed, and also led the dancing. Her

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

relationship with William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, is well known. Her life at Court was what we should describe as dissolute ; she and her nobleman lover had a narrow escape of imprisonment. Nor does it appear that she was faithful even to him. Therefore, the argument that Mary could not be the object of Shakespeare's lyrical passion does not hold good. Indeed, in 1607 she married Captain William Polwhele, and she is also mentioned in contemporary records as the wife of Captain Lougher. Neither of these, it would seem, was more important in his day than Shakespeare, who probably moved in a Bohemian way among all grades of society, from the lowest to the highest. Her own interest in acting would, no doubt, bring her into direct contact with him. And if, as seems likely, the "Mr. W. H." to whom Shakespeare dedicated the sonnets was William Herbert, it is quite conceivable that he was in love with her and sought this strange means of making his passion known without undue offence to his friend. Mr. Sidney Lee has described the theory as "fantastic," and there are certainly anomalies. Mary is described as having "a long nose, and narrow face, and a weak, rounded, retiring chin," and to be moreover fair. Now it is just

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

possible that Shakespeare used the terms "dark" or "black" with regard to her reputation, which at one time was both. This symbolism, too, would have made it easier for him to dedicate the Sonnets to her lover, while Mary herself would understand. The following sonnet bears this interpretation, though he would be a bold man to insist unduly upon any theory in a matter that has so little evidence to show:—

"In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slander'd with a bastard shame;
For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem
At such, who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says, beauty should look so."

In his special plea, "The Man Shakespeare," Mr. Harris goes so far as to claim that in his plays Shakespeare is consciously self-revealed. This is a much more sensible supposition than

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

those by which the plays are reduced to the level of a Baconian Chinese puzzle. But one must accept the theory with caution, for equally it is certain that Shakespeare, becoming interested in various phases of life, desires to reveal them, though incidentally dipping into the palette of his own heart. No man who had not known jealousy could have written "Othello." Othello is the outcast, the Bohemian rather than the Moor, who has to give up his love to those covered by the whiteness of nobility. The Court of Elizabeth was full of snobs.

Hamlet, in this limited sense, may be a portrait of the poet. The inconsistency and the curious compounding of decadence; of interest in art; the artistic desire to work up the "play-scene" till the Court is staggered by its reality; are actual and authentic revelations of a man whose whole life was an attempt to visualise himself and his philosophy, and to make the world stare.

I shall never forget Irving in "Coriolanus," for it revealed, as no reading might, Shakespeare's opinion of the people or "crowd," the "wisdom of whose choice is rather to have one's hat than one's heart." Shakespeare's attitude to Falstaff, even to Iago, is more

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

tolerant than to the mob, who have no individuality, but yet are units.

As a rule some great motive such as fate, ambition, or the great darkness of "Lear," dominates the whole drama. But Mr. Harris holds that Mary Fitton and Shakespeare himself provide the very basis upon which the great fabric of the plays was reared. There may have been much of Malvolio in him as well as Hamlet and Othello. Jaques and Romeo, too, were in him. And the last of his great works, "The Tempest," contains surely a picture of Shakespeare in his own person, which Extension lecturers used to sanction. It is to be hoped that the boldness of Mr. Harris's books will not have driven people to deny this vital fact. For in Prospero we see Shakespeare at the height of his powers, his life "shipwreck'd," yet still ruling a realm of fancy and of faëry, beside which the kingdoms of this world are as dust.

IV

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

IN discussing Shakespeare from the plain man's point of view it must not be thought that scholarship in any way is underrated. At the same time the Stratford movement, though having behind it the steadying power of scholarship, is above all things popular.

Shakespeare is important to us not because he was a unique Englishman, but because he is the typical Englishman. His reverence for custom and pomp, his talk about love and wine, the fact that he regarded Falstaff as funny and Hamlet as tragic—in a word, his easy acceptance of authority, coupled with occasional outbursts of emotion, are English to a degree. Take Gonzalo in "The Tempest." Has not Gonzalo the English attitude to Utopias and Socialism? He begins with a fine scheme and then is gently laughed out of it, being ruled by his betters, though in some little danger from Caliban. If Shakespeare intended this play to be his vision of a world

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

beautiful, a paradise regained, he never forgoes the Englishman's luxury of laughing at ideals. Shakespeare then is the reality of which John Bull was but a caricature. Only once have I seen a typical John Bull. It was in the lounge of an hotel. A thick-set, honest, rude, and podgy person came in, stood like a screen before the fire, set his thumbs firmly in the armholes of his waistcoat, and gazed round at us with bovine stolidity. But, when he spoke, it was not to assure with needless reiteration that he would "never be a slave." He said a few words in very broken English, and told us that he was a Spaniard on his first visit to this country. In England there never was, nor ever can be, that strange phantom, that over-solid ghost known as John Bull. I labour this point because, when one talks of a national movement in art, a chorus of critical ravens deplore the tendency, believing that unless the Briton become a cosmopolitan he will remain "insular." Shakespeare, and other people who live on islands, develop individualities. Some day we may come across the John Bull of our caricatures without having to go to Spain for him.

Mr. Ernest Newman, one of our best musical critics, challenged his opponents in the Folk

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Movement to set down on paper a description of the typical Englishman. Shakespeare was too clever and John Bull too stupid to use as an illustration. Mr. Newman being the cleverest of the anti-nationalists I gave him a definition of the Englishman. I repeat it here, because nothing could do more harm to the Stratford Movement than to convey the idea that we wish to foster a local type. The English are a mixture of many races, pure in one respect. We are Indo-Europeans, and are kindred of the Celtic, Teutonic, and Indian stock.

Emerson wrote that the Englishman was the mud of all the races—that is to say, the mixed soil of Europe, piled up by the avalanche of invasion, silted by the rivers of time. To this day, the fair hair and blue eyes of Scarborough and Whitby fishermen make one remember the Vikings. Nor need I remind a musical critic that the word Elgar bespeaks Norse descent, and that in the music of Olaf and of British Caractacus that blood cries aloud. The Norman invasion did not dominate the English type, but was absorbed. Who knows whether the *entente cordiale* did not begin at Senlac? And not only have armed invaders fought their way into the family circle, but each

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

county has moulded its type and its dialect, throwing up defences against the common enemy, Cosmopolitanism. And when I walk along a London street, seeing Parsees, Kaffirs, Frenchmen, Jews, Germans, and Spaniards, London does not seem less English. These barriers of race are everywhere in evidence. Each face flies its own flag.

Mr. Newman held that all this talk about nationality and race feeling was a pose, that Reason, the sharp-tongued goddess, had broken down these sentimental barriers. When Shakespeare drew Shylock he showed his race feeling. Though Shylock is the hero of the work, no Jew would have pictured him as did Shakespeare. Though I have several good friends among the Jews, Reason has never shown me that I am a Jew. But when Shakespeare created Othello it was a very different matter. The character is drawn as an Englishman, and only colour marks the difference. The cleverest critic cannot acquit Shakespeare of the natural race feelings common to all men.

"Reason is of all countries," says La Bruyère. But if all countries were one, Reason would have less opportunity for varied development. True, nations depend upon each other for new phases of thought and new expressions of art.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

We love Wagner none the less because his art sprang from the soul of a people and was based on folk-tales. But here is the flaw: "Our good friends the nationalists and the folk-song enthusiasts always seem to me to come to grief here. Before we begin to found a 'national school,' let us at least agree as to what the national characteristics are." The critic wants to find out first, by reason and science, what is "national." The answer lies on our breakfast tables, in the form of eggs and bacon or newspapers. The food of the English, French, and German replies to a question which abstract reason stammers over. The fiction of England, like our drama, cannot be mistaken. At the same time the English race derives from so many sources that it is difficult to find half-a-dozen main characteristics. Admittedly we are insular—some one said that the Channel was wider than the Atlantic. And this also is true of the North Sea. The English universities, public schools, and games such as Rugby football, are distinctive. The independence that will not bow to militarism, and the public opinion that bars the way to revolution, are at once English. The modesty of the Englishman, who is content for his island (or rather peninsula) to be a centre of self-governing

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

colonies rather than a dominator of servile States, is remarkable, especially as the land was once a Roman colony.

Defoe, in "The True-born Englishman," says the last word on the fusion of the race :

"Fate jumbled them together, God knows how ;
Whate'er they were, they're true-born English now."

This glorious two-edged sword of a poem accepts the Englishman as a grotesque reality. We are all foreigners very much at home ; parvenus whose pride is our race ; insular and world-wide ; we are at once a contradiction and an interrogation. But we are not imaginary, though passionate lovers of the past. There seems always to be a demand for popular versions of English mythology. Pageantry and dancing are as much in the blood as in the days of Shakespeare. Of this Dr. Charles Harris, the Canadian conductor, is aware. In his Colonial choral tours, whenever he wants to impart a peculiarly English flavour, these very folk-songs are sung. And does not Tennyson—surely a typical English poet—say, "He is the best cosmopolite who loves his native country best" ? The impartial man is always abroad and never at home.

The entire significance of the Stratford

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Movement lies in the race question. If we have lost our national individuality, or even are suspected of having lost it, our power of corporate action and mutual sympathy are weakened. We should be like men who were not clear as to their own individuality.

Shakespeare reflected the Elizabethan age as might a mirror. He is the banner-bearer round whom we must rally if anything like the Elizabethan spirit of enterprise and self-preservation are to be regained. The tendency of education and sentiment in the past has been to regard Shakespeare as the tailor's model of language rather than of character; as a profound philosopher, who used poetry as a puzzle; as a writer whom one should hold in solemn awe, read as seldom as possible, and whose plays are to be watched in a spirit of solemn admiration.

We, in accepting him as a master, the master indeed of the ceremonies of a national festival, place his art upon a human basis:—

He was an Englishman to the core, born in the heart of England, and living in the hearts of Englishmen.

As author of the Sonnets he is revealed to us as a man of like passions with

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

ourselves, purified in the fire of experience, rising from height to height by and through his dramas.

Of his earlier plays, "Much Ado About Nothing" holds the stage to-day because it was the work of a man who had loved and suffered in youth, till by reason of his buoyant spirit he was able comically to view love, giving us Beatrice and Benedick. Those two characters are clad in the immortality born of a comedy that can laugh at love without banality.

"Measure for Measure" wins additional interest owing to the little recognised fact that Richard Wagner used it as the poem of his early opera "Liebesverbot."

It is the custom to smile in a superior way at "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and to regard "Romeo and Juliet" as alternating between sentiment and a melancholy passion that leads to death. And in these two Verona plays we are able to rebut the anti-nationalists. The Italians themselves do not regard Shakespeare as insular, despite the anachronisms that are to be found there. The city of Verona regards the Shakespearean connection as a great honour. In November 1910 a bust was set up there in honour of the great foreign

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

dramatist. They honoured him as we regard Dante. The sculpture is the work of Renato Cattani, and represents the tragic Shakespeare standing by the reputed tomb of Juliet. The *Morning Post* commenting upon this said some interesting things about Italy and Italian feeling as they differ from ours :—

“Italian sentiment is more imaginative than ours. It can ignore proprieties of fact and date. It is no effort for the Italian mind to assume a retrospective attitude. In England it is different ; we are learning the lesson, as the pageants of recent years witness ; but Oxford venerates its mythical founder, King Alfred, with less grace and natural acceptance of the improbable than Italy displays in honouring the legends of the Capitol. Not that the English lack imagination ; but the Italian imagination is more vivid, and its exercise more spontaneous. Poetry, though England is one of its favourite homes, is treated with scanty acknowledgment by our nation ; in Italy poetical sentiment is honoured by all ; the look and dress of the people in the street reveal a nation which is conscious of beauty and not ashamed of it, the speech and gesture of gondoliers and fruit-sellers are poetical, it is never a long way to the ideal.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

“There is no limit to the friendly recognition of foreign talent: Byron, Shelley, the Brownings, Winckelmann, Ruskin, have been received into the commonwealth of Italian letters; busts and inscribed tablets decorate the houses in which they lodged; there is a Piazza at Ravenna named after Byron, and his sojourn at Venice, Verona, and Pisa is a theme of never-failing interest. It is not only that they were welcomed when they lived in Italy, but their memory is accepted among Italian memories. We, too, are hospitable to strangers; but we show more honour to patriots than to poets, being more interested in politics than in poetry. Hospitality is an old custom in Verona.”

And it is this spirit of an Italy beloved by Shakespeare, though probably never visited by him, that we desire to equal in the land of his birth. When we remember the Medicis, the wealth won on the Rialto, turned to the service of beauty and to the glory of God, one is surprised that a similar awakening of national spirit is not more apparent here, for it shines only rarely in the persons of a Charles Flower, or in other directions, an Andrew Carnegie.

It is not so much the generous spirit of

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

giving as the absence of any useful direction for artistic expenditure that keeps us back.

For instance, if you enter the Valhalla of Saxon heroes, set up by Ludwig II. near Ratisbon, the first figure that meets your eye is that of Alfred the Great. Yet, in these days of National Service Leagues and Dreadnoughts, he, the originator of modern nationalism, is barely remembered, and mostly for his lack of skill as a toaster of cakes.

And it is precisely this traditional spirit for which the Stratford Movement stands, and which has kept it alive with private endowment, but entirely without public subsidy. From an educational point of view "the abstract chronicles of our times," as revealed in the pageants and historical plays of Shakespeare, are of chief importance.

And in a book which of necessity tries to show how much more may be done in all sections and domains of art, if all the publics will centralise at Stratford, it is satisfactory that, under Mr. Benson, this side of the work has been carried out to the extreme limit, and with complete success. The following plays of this class have been produced at Stratford: "King John," "Richard II.," "Henry IV." (Parts I. and II.), "Henry V.," "Henry VI."



Photo by Langfier

MR. LEWIS WALLER AS ROMEO

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

(Parts I., II., and III.), and "Richard III." and "Henry VIII."

Is there one of us, from the most superior critic to the humble author of these words, who would not have a clearer vision and a brighter fire of national consciousness for this experience?

And when Mr. Benson produced them as a continuous cycle, the panorama of generations passed before one's eyes like a vivid dream.

This method of teaching history will in time lighten the labours of schoolmasters, and invest the details of history with a relevance and force unthinkable without the vivid spectacle of actual events.

I am not going to discuss the authorship of "Henry VIII." Whoever wrote it, whether in whole or part, it is Shakespearean drama, and was produced a few years after the King's death. The characters were as near to the audience as are Gladstone, Beaconsfield, and Parnell to us. Even in the legendary plays, Shakespeare depicted men and women of his own day, even when the scene was laid in Bohemia.

Then we have the Roman plays, "Julius Cæsar," "Antony and Cleopatra," especially

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

valuable in maintaining a balance, and preventing our nationalism from degenerating into insular drama. For even our critics contribute to the breadth and humanity of the scheme.

And the others I should group thus, mentioning nothing that has not been played at the Memorial Theatre :—

“Hamlet,” “Othello,” “Macbeth,” and
“King Lear,” the plays of the soul,
each character of which reveals, as it
were, a possible phase or tendency of
our individual characters.

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “As
You Like It,” and the other comedies.

“The Tempest,” Shakespeare’s vision of
the ideal world, peopled by human
beings, but a world in which Caliban
no longer has the mastery as he has
to-day in our midst. It is a world
ruled by Prospero, an Eden in which
Ferdinand and Miranda regain para-
dise for us.

These plays provide an atmosphere, a school
of beauty, to which humanity may turn, an
element in which the soul may bathe as does
the body in the veritable sea.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

It remains to emphasise one point. Shakespeare was and remains a contemporary dramatist.

Looking back upon Shakespeare, we are apt to say that he deals with the past. In a sense this is true. But here lies the significance of Stratford. A certain grandeur and beauty, a splendour and large freedom, have gone from us. An age of innovation, prosperity, and Empire has swept us along till even the poet of Imperial expansion has warned us, "Lest we forget."

And now, when there are undoubted signs that all is not well, when plutocracy, and to a great extent alien wealth, has to a large degree supplanted our aristocracy, while democracy has not yet learned its enormous responsibility, faith and tradition must speak in the authentic voice of an England that was great, and must sound their clarion call to the ends of the earth, wherever the language of Shakespeare and the bonds of race are ready to respond.

I have heard people say that we must get away from the past, and build up a drama of to-day. If we cast away the Elizabethan ruff for the high collar we lose little. But what sort of civilisation are we to portray?

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

If we place upon the stage modern reality, what sort of picture will it make?

In a hundred years our successors may have a different answer. The honest answer now is that we have lost much, and that were the days of Elizabeth to come again we should be the gainers.

Stratford is not building upon unholy foundations a fool's paradise, but awaking traditions, clothed in the warm flesh of a living and throbbing actuality.

Modern drama gives us few pictures that are either sane or splendid, whatever their age or period. It is, as a rule, artificial and "romantic," concerned with the more or less exciting episodes in the lives of puppets, in whose existence we do not for a moment believe. "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is a fair picture of what England was and might well become again without deterioration.

Show me a similar comedy in contemporary drama.

Where the Elizabethans had "As You Like It" we must put up with German musical comedies, or French farces, mutilated and adapted till they have lost even the original raciness that made them palatable to "flaneurs" abroad.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

Where they had the tragedy of "Macbeth" we have melodramas, which carry but a faint echo of real horror, and fail to approach to the humanity of great tragic art.

I mention no names because there would be no point in censuring plays that are here to-day and gone to-morrow. The works which were in my mind in writing this will be forgotten before the printer's proofs are corrected, but new examples will bear me out.

On the other hand, I see no incongruity in mentioning Galsworthy's "Justice" in the same sentence as "Macbeth." The one deals with ambition and pride, the other with failure and disgrace.

And, just as Shakespeare's play must have gone to the hearts of many in an age of boundless ambition and energy, so "Justice," with its picture of a blind vengeance, strikes compassion into the hearts of those who view the hopeless, aimless struggle for life in the cities of to-day. Both artists wrote the work in obedience to their own need for creative expression, leaving action to the world of action.

With so matter of fact a people as ours there is no need to insist upon the obvious. Our natural instinct to take pleasures seriously provides the popular dramatist with a peculiarly

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

receptive audience. And I hope the time will never come for the Memorial Theatre to open its doors to an art that deals with problems in a peddling fashion. The self-conscious playwright should be excluded.

Apparently the cities cannot detect the flimsy in art, but only life and beauty can live in the Festival town on the Avon.

Rather than tread the debateable ground of individual reputations, let us dream of the ideal theatre, with the actual achievement of Stratford in our minds.

We have shown what Stratford has done, and have considered the spirit of Shakespeare, apart from the actual work of his hands.

It now remains to leave the tilled field and to look upon the prairie, for there is no limit to the possibilities of development.

To-day the Memorial Theatre is more alive than ever, but in time it might fossilise. Yet if it became formal, ceasing to develop and refusing re-birth, surely the waters of the Avon would turn into lead, and Shakespeare's birth-place mark the burial of his ideals and our own.

V

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS : A PERSONAL REVERIE

THIS book has been to such an extent an arrangement of various developments in folk-art that one cannot exactly get the perspective. Suppose, for instance, that in the process of time it was found possible to build at Stratford a great Cathedral of the Arts, what would it be like ?

Two things are necessary for its accomplishment :

A new conception of the theatre.

A clear idea of the kind of work that would constitute a National Festival.

Within sight of the City of Dreams, fronting with its terraces a broad and ever-flowing river, stands the Dream Theatre. As yet it is built only within the hearts of a few, though its foundations lie deep in human consciousness. "Whether at Naishapur or Babylon," on the banks of the Hudson or Avon, what matter ! It is a National Theatre, not by official

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

control, but by its essential character. For it will present on the stage the people's past, so that, kindled by legendary glories, hopes may beat higher and horizons expand. Standing back somewhat from the river, its frontage suggests a Greek temple, but the shape is unusual. Rising as it is carried back, the roof curves like a wave to another climax, whence it falls to the rear, which is symmetrical in design. Its very shape suggests the on-coming tide of the human spirit.

Nor is it the result of caprice, but is forced upon the dream-architect by the need of stage room. In order to change the scenes properly there must be as much room above and below the stage as there is between stage level and the top of the proscenium arch. There must not only be space for artists and stage hands, but for scenery and machines of elaborate character, and a revolving stage.

In this respect as in others the theatre is modelled upon that at Bayreuth. But it is not of mere brick and wood, nor, indeed, so costly as the Prinz Regenten Theatre at Munich. Yet time and reflection have enabled the dream-architect to evolve several ideas which add to the beauty and reduce the cost of the work. The shape of the auditorium is that of an

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

amphitheatre, broadening as the seats rise, tier above tier, so that each of the fifteen hundred auditors is focussed upon the stage.

The orchestra is hidden from view, and is so placed that the sound goes straight to the audience rather than rising up like a fog of sound. And not only is it designed for a full orchestra, but contains specially arranged seats for a hidden chorus, for reasons that will follow, when we discuss the nature of national art.

The seats are comfortable, and the colouring of the simple decorations is quiet and restful. The whole aim is to provide a means of hearing and beholding. I see it clearly enough to notice that the theatre is the central figure in a garden, with restaurants that suggest quiet, intimate little dinners between the acts, rather than the rush and scramble of a theatre supper in town. One minute before the acts begin a fanfare is blown on trumpets. The lights are lowered, and then extinguished. The doors are closed, and the audience waits in primal darkness for—what?

In that question lies the entire failure of the art of the theatre. Given the most ideal conditions, a perfect theatre in a pleasant place, endowed by all the millionaires and attended by the entire democracy, without a conception of

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

national needs, of normal dramatic hunger, the whole thing is a work of darkness.

A programme can only be arranged by considering man's needs, and how they are supplied by our modern or ancient art.

If the needs of the people call for a new revelation of the spirit of man or God, it will be given.

First let us see what we hold in store.

The first aim of travel, the great result of experience, is to know men of all kinds. Therefore to ask for the works of Shakespeare would seem a sound basis of any national repertory.

Apart from the universal human feeling of Shakespeare, and his minute characterisation, another kind of appeal needs satisfaction. The broad instinct of sex is so dominant that many a play is based upon some suggestive presentation of it. The flippant nastiness that passes the censor combines with the feather-headed drawing-room play in spreading sentimental or unhealthy ideas. The actual passion cannot be presented in words. And it is not good for people to meet the God Eros unaware. An experience of sexual passion, a trial spin of the emotions, is possible through Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde." Both in origin and conception this work is British. And if we go

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

to the roots of the legend we find that Wagner did not invent its modernity. The essential idea of our legend is the lordship of Love, a tyrant scheming always for the future, brushing aside human obstacles, and using man and his desires like the Immanent Will of Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts." The work which happens to be the crowning glory of Wagner shows us the fiery glow of sunset, deepening to night, the merging of Love in Death. Beginning with physical passion as expressed in the music of the prelude, every fibre of the soul is quickened by the combined arts of Music and Philosophy. This is indeed Aristotle's purification by pity.

In the same way Wagner's "Parsifal" tells the divine story of Youth becoming wise through gradually unfolding knowledge, and the growth of human sympathy.

The mystery of sex, and the idea of Divine Love as revealed in Wagner's "Parsifal," are surely part of an orderly and inclusive scheme. Recent operatic experiences preclude the criticism that such works could not be done. But they would be treated as festival days of a Nationalist Religion rather than as after-dinner spectacles for a fashionable mob. The probability is that the same artists

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

and the existing orchestras would excel themselves under new conditions. The new translations of the Wagnerian dramas, which permit of the baton falling on the important syllables, make it easy to hear the English words.

The function of the theatre does not stop at the qualities we have mentioned :—

A wide sweep of life in the works of Shakespeare.

The qualities of sympathy and the passion of sex, through Wagner.

The other classes may, however, be set out very easily. In fact a summary would well nigh explain them :—

(a) The dramas of Shakespeare and Wagner, alternating and supplementing each other, produced by existing organisations under the direction of the Governors.

(b) Modern dramas of the kind suggested by the names of Yeats, Shaw, Galsworthy, and other distinctive creators.

(c) The Greek dramatists (as translated by Gilbert Murray, with music by Granville Bantock).

(d) The performance in connection with each Festival of morris dances, folk-songs, and English games.

(e) To bring down the best Choral Societies

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

to perform works of national importance, such as "Gerontius," "Midnight," and "The Sun God's Return."

(*f*) To foster the local singing of folk-song, choral and solo, and to encourage the people of the place to produce their own plays and pageants representing their own history, ideals, and jokes.

(*g*) To further include all art-work in the form of drama, dance, or song, provided they be vital and interesting.

(*h*) To accept and encourage the co-operation of all existing bodies, subject only to a general control of policy by the Governors.

So far we have been concerned with an imaginary theatre. But we have shown that, by ignoring distinctions and varieties, a general body of work exists that would cover a wide range of human activity and interest. Not only would all these plays and choral works be produced, but a course of truly national festivity would reign. Old harvest customs, many of the folk-pleasures of pre-puritan times, would return. With the exception of bear-baiting, the jolly Middle Ages would awake to the merrymaking of modernity.

Stratford is an ideal base for these operations, and already the material and organisation exist.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The idea of such a theatre on the banks of the Hudson was formulated by Madame Nordica some time ago. But Music was to be supreme. The London National Theatre project at present goes to the other extreme. In the book of plans Music shares a chapter with Refreshments. No doubt Wagner would figure on the wine-list, among the hocks ; and Elgar represent Hereford cider.

But at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, the only endowed theatre in England, despite the handicap of a small building, the main lines of this dream-theatre are being carried out. In addition to Shakespeare, and dramatic works old and new, folk-song and old English dances are among the festivities.

These forms of art appeal to the race. And when I write of Anglo-Celtic feeling I include America, believing that, as in Shakespeare's day, we are one people, and that our common heritage of folk-art would bridge over the inevitable superficial differences that have arisen. In England or America, through Shakespeare, this dream will come true.

And if the reader will turn to the summary of the proposed repertory it will be seen that all the varieties set down are popular and

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

successful in their several ways, though never have all these forms been brought together in one scheme.

So far do I regard the communal nature of the undertaking as important, that not only should the performances be part of an Annual Festival, but those working for the theatre should be united by a common bond. In connection with the theatre would be a handicraft guild and a farm colony, so that the artists and stage-hands might, as far as feasible, live a healthy outdoor life. Of course in the case of special actors, orchestral players, and the few necessary specialists, this could not be managed. Isolde could not be expected to hoe, nor Ophelia to weed. But the over-specialisation of the artist is one of the crimes of the commercial theatre, a thing unheard of in Greece, and only deemed essential in degenerate times. The stagnant life of the agriculturist has its counterpart in the neo-monastic condition of the actor's craft.

This reminds one that England's healthiest art is that of the Choral North, where men and women sing for the love of the work, and find that it helps rather than hinders their daily labours. And it would seem that, if a popular national drama is to arise, peculiarly expressive

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

of our own life in the legends of our country, the voice of the people must be heard in a literal sense. And that is why, in my imaginary orchestra pit, I left places for the singers.

Just as in the Greek dramas the Chorus represents the Mass, and in the same way that Wagner's orchestra comments upon the action through music, we must incorporate the chorus of oratorio with the opera in the drama of the future. How much better would it have been if the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* actually sang to us the nature of love, rather than leaving it to the unaided orchestra. For the ordinary man does not understand Wagner without explanation.

The subject matter of such choral dramas naturally would be Anglo-Celtic. Wagner sought his material in the quarry of the *Nibelungenlied*, and put into his presentment his own personal political opinions quite as caustically as does Mr. Shaw. The difference lies in the fact that Wagner was in love with beauty, while Mr. Shaw, being a puritan, puts duty before dreams. The same idea obsessed Oscar Wilde. He was so ardent a sociologist that he made a point of "not talking shop," which accounts for "*The Importance of Being Earnest*." Wagner, having genius instead of



Photo by L. Caswall Smith

MISS CONSTANCE COLLIER AS JULIET

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

manners, writes his "Ring," with Siegfried the Superman, Brünnhilde the suffragette, Alberich the millionaire, and Mrs. Grundy in the person of Fricka. Already Lord Howard de Walden and Mr. Holbrooke have written and composed a choral drama based on a tale in the Mabinogion. While, as long ago as November 1908, the Leeds Symphony Orchestra performed an excerpt from another by Mr. Rutland Boughton and myself, dealing with the birth of Arthur. For Arthur seems to us typical of the Superman that we need, a son of human and spiritual passion, born of the primal longing of Uther, and the beauty and yearning of Igraine, the free and unfettered woman, for whom the age cries without ceasing. Mr. Hadley's Arthurian works prove him to be artistically our brother, an American knight of the Table Round. And when composers and poets unite to clothe the thoughts of to-day in the beauty of the past, the gropings of science and the dreams of philosophers will become vocal. No longer will wisdom be the secret possession of the sage, but, clad in loveliness, its expression will be the joyful religion of the folk. And the choral form, united with the dramatic, enables the orchestral chorus to speak out with the tones of a giant whatever prophetic message

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

or commentary upon the action be called forth by necessity. Modern opera is the plaything of fools. If we turn to oratorio we find its more recent developments entirely hopeful. But it cannot be national and in the broad sense popular so long as the Angel in Elgar's "Gerontius" wears the dress of the ball-room, and bows to the audience like a ballad singer. And he who has met Nietzsche's "Zarathustra" in evening dress upon the concert platform must, in Nietzschean phrase, "hold his nose."

Of course these works of Delius and Elgar are not choral dramas, but at the Dream Theatre, with hidden chorus and orchestra, and suitably gowned principals on a twilight stage, the Christianity of Elgar and the Nietzscheanity of Delius, or the Omarian philosophy of Granville Bantock, would be freed from the absurdity of concert-platform treatment.

Then again there are the old folk-plays; "Everyman"; the works of the Chester and Coventry Cycles; which always were and will be popular, yet have nothing in common with the theatre as we know it.

I have found great, but unhappily solitary pleasure, in reading the Wakefield Cycle, especially the Second Nativity Play of the

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

Shepherds. But these, with their holy compounds of buffoonery and mystery, are not for individuals but for crowds. In fact the idea of "Home Counties," in *The World's Work* for September (1910), for an open-air theatre, would at least give us these plays again, though music-drama could not live out of doors.

At the risk of repetition, but for the sake of clearness, I will set down a typical programme, reminding the reader that not a single feature of this Dream Theatre scheme is original except the conception of a unity of the Arts, as the basis of a popular national folk worship, in place of the flounderings of the modern theatre, both in deep and shallow waters. Each type and variety of the following productions have been successful in their own areas :—

A WEEK'S WORK AT THE TEMPLE OF DREAMS

(The Festival to be under the control of the Dream Theatre Governors, the main tendency being to centralise Anglo-Saxon Art around the personality of Shakespeare, by means of his works, and to produce other works akin to them in folk-spirit.)

COMEDY DAY.—Revels, Dancing, and Singing Games,
followed by "As You Like It."

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

CHORAL DAY.—“Thus Spake Zarathustra.” *Delius*.

Choral Variations of National Folk-Songs. (*Various*.)

“The Dream of Gerontius.” *Elgar*.

“Death and Transfiguration,” Tone Poem. *Strauss*.

MUSIC DRAMA.—“Tristan and Isolde.” *Wagner*.

(Orchestra and company from the capital.)

GREEK PLAY.—“Orestes,” “Ædipus,” or “Hippolytus.”

(Produced with music, in English, by the Shakespearean Company.)

MODERN COMEDY.—Social satire, Irish folk-plays, or pantomime.

TRAGEDY DAY.—A special production, with new music and full orchestra, of “Hamlet,” “Othello,” or “Macbeth.”

LOCAL REVELS.—Dancing and Song by people of the place, and, if possible, an original local play, or a burlesque presentation of the Temple Ideals. This is an annual feature in the life of the Garden City at Letchworth.

CHORAL DRAMA.—Anglo-Celtic Legendary work, with orchestra, and provincial Festival Chorus.

CLOSING DAY.—Pageant and Procession, followed by a performance of “The Tempest.”

The last day I would devote to the production of a mediæval play from one of the old Cycles, on an open-air stage, exactly as in the old days. So far as could be managed, the whole town would be in costume, and the play would be followed by an old English carnival and a river fête.

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

A programme of this nature would be varied and elaborated as time went on. In detail it is assailable, but each form of popular art has its place.

There can be no doubt of the value of such an environment, even for a few days. The modern city would be dingy to eyes that had been fed upon the dreams and laughter, the beauty and wisdom of such a modern Camelot. The spirit of the Table Round would fill this tourney of the arts. And, like Arthur's knights, men would set out thence in quest of the Graal. For the Graal of the Modern surely is the light that banishes ugliness, which alone is evil.

If our cities were made beautiful, if Apollo slew Mammon, the wealth of the world would for its own sake sweep away the suffering and the stupidity from which our civilisation derives its woes. Just as the cruder forms of Christianity taught men to suffer, so the living Art and the living Christ warn him that the cup is ready and the vine is ripe. In the spread of a glorious dissatisfaction the artist is the torch-bearer. But he is alone, and only when the nation, the wider family circle of to-morrow, meets together to behold and to enjoy in community, is art of any use. And

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

lest this theatre become a shadow show, it is necessary to link it with a living body of men, as an integral part of their township.

Its realisation depends upon co-operation between those who see kinship between handicraft, healthy outdoor life and agriculture, and the Arts. Do not Wagner, Whitman, Millet, Morris, and G. F. Watts prove the kinship? Even those who wish Art to educate or teach, in a literal sense, are feeling after the same idea.

Art, like any other form of religion, is an expression of truth, not a form of propaganda. And to express a true life we must create an environment. When a town has been evolved, which is the very centre of everything Anglo-Celtic, when the physical and spiritual culture of the nation looks to it as a place of health and good life, there will be something to show for the theatre as the rallying point, as the Cathedral of Beauty. Being a privately endowed enterprise, to a great degree supported by the public, it will not languish upon a subsidy nor strive to please a rabble. To attract the people it must, at the lowest possible cost, bring together all classes and conditions for the double purpose of healthy holiday and new surroundings.

A TEMPLE OF DREAMS

The Temple Theatre as I see it is near the City of Dreams, which waits always for destiny. It is not too near the busy haunts of men. Only those to whom the Festival Spirit calls will trouble to come. Away from the bustle it stands where mediæval memory clings, watered by pure raindrops from the clearing skies of our own day.

It is surrounded by trees, with its houses and workshops, and its agricultural belt. The fanfare has sounded, and the audience enters the building as the sun in loving strength burns its roof to fiery bronze. For therein glow the hearts of men, quickened by "the emotion of multitude."

And, after it is all over, can you not see the loungers on the landing-stage, watching the launches float down the river to the town, as the moonlight shimmers over the calm that follows great emotion?

Or, better still, can you not hear the shrill whistle of an engine that is to take back to their labour a thousand toilers, who, having followed a local chorus to the Dream Temple, will have heard also the glory that was Greece, and the freedom that fires the soul of a people?

VI

WAGNER AND HIS RELATION TO SHAKESPEARE

HAVING pictured our ideal theatre, and seen the analogy that exists respecting our own national spirit and that of the Greeks, we may now bind our ideas together by considering Wagner as growing out of Shakespeare on the one hand and the dramatists of Athens on the other.

Shakespeare, in Meredith's phrase, was "broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture." Wagner was narrow. His was the art of concentration, of unity burning to a point of fire to kindle emotion.

In "Art and Revolution," one of his finest essays, he says that "we cannot make one step forward without being brought face to face with its connection with the Art of ancient Greece."

And he sums up the Greek people under the symbol of Apollo, "with all the traits of

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

energetic earnestness, beautiful and strong." It was thus, he says, that Aeschylus knew him. And when the tragic poet awakened Apollo to speech, that is to say, when all that was noble in the various arts was drawn together in the composite art of drama, man might at last see himself, in all laughter and suffering, beneath the chastening anguish of Oedipus, in the divine sacrifice of Iphigenia, in the agony of Antigone, or under the lash of Aristophanes. Life became vocal and visible to him. His public re-creation, his religion, and his philosophy bore the mark of manhood.

But he knew also that man in his degradation, amid the sorrows that a complex civilisation had laid upon him, had cast off the pride of manly strength. His religion was no longer even an echo of that strong Voice which came "not to bring peace but a sword," and bore small likeness to the Healer and Comforter of mankind, but carried itself meekly amid tyrannies, and was used by the rich to keep the poor in their places. In fact the poison of oligarchy had eaten away the Christian spirit of community. Yet beside all this was a changed world. The true Christian ideal was not alien to the Greek. For while

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Athens knew the curse of slavery, and had shed the petals of her roseate glory in the sunset that was destruction, the armour of the Christian was but rusty through misuse, and cheapened to some extent by the mean spirit of the times. Therefore Wagner saw that in Hellenism lay the hope of his generation.

Therefore in Wagner's dramas we find from "Tannhauser" to "Parsifal" the pure doctrines of Christ, in the "Ring of the Nibelungs" the spirit of Apollo, and in "The Meistersingers" the united strength of golden Hellenism and ruddy mediæval faith, and the folk.

Wagner held that Art must be at once a religion and a re-creation. From the first his aims were conscious, while Shakespeare's probably were not. There may be any number of conjectures as to the nature of Hamlet's madness. But in the case of Wagner's creations there is never a shadow of doubt as to his meaning among people to whom words and actions convey any ideas at all.¹ The unconscious Art of Shakespeare gives the breadth of Meredith's ten thousand beeves at pasture, while Wagner, with his conscious, propagandist music-dramas, is mounted upon horse-back,

¹ Except in the incorrect versions usually seen in England, which are not easy to follow.—R. R. B.

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

and, like his Valkyries, bears us straight to the Walhalla of his conceptions.

Perhaps the first of the Wagnerian works to examine closely should be "Tristan and Isolde." It is the one above all which reveals Wagner as the perfect artist, complex in his means and absolutely simple in his results. Love is the phase of life most often attempted by the artist, usually with the worst results. Either he is a sentimentalist, dealing only with the absurdities and the affectations that attend those to whom love is a form of sickness rather than healthy normality. Or, being essentially a beastly or erotic man, he smears his canvas or degrades his stage with gross and equally abnormal pictures of the worse than animal side of the subject.

Now, to a clean man love is the delight in beauty, personified in one woman, whom he regards first as comrade and equal, and then, diving deep into his primal nature, longs for as wife. Or, from the woman's point of view, man becomes a symbol of strength and energy, inspiring trust and at the same time marking him out as a companion and mate.

The complications of marriage may provide a comedy, but the only sane and healthy tragedy that can arise from love is in fate

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

and circumstance coming between the lovers, the eternal conflict of Love and Death.

Love is the expression of the race spirit working for its continuance, and a drama dealing with it should be so far religious that it reveals to the beholder the nature of the passion, the need for a complete union of body and soul. The capacity of men and women for love, and their standard and measure of it, determine the whole future of the race, as well as their personal happiness.

With Wagner as with Shakespeare, their ideas went along two main roads: the love of women and of their own nation, with occasional flashes of mystical vision.

Wagner's drama of love is not only of supreme interest for its own sake, as essentially a British tale, with a direct appeal to normal feeling. But, in comparison with "Romeo and Juliet," a few points of technical interest stand out.

"Romeo and Juliet" had long been held the full expression of human love. And so might it have remained had not form and methods changed; and had not human thought also progressed. Shakespeare's view was broad enough! But he had to express himself by the poet's art alone, and, owing to the spirit

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

of his times, to avoid introspection and psychology.

So far as method goes I know of no more useful comparison than that of Scene 2, Act ii., of *both* dramas. The scenic atmosphere is practically the same in both cases.

“*Romeo*.—But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the *envious* moon,

Who is already *sick* and *pale* with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she;

Be not her maid since she is *envious*;

Her *vestal* livery is but *sick* and *green*,

And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.”

(Thus Romeo comes to Juliet. But Isolde is able to await Tristan without having to create an atmosphere of love-sickness, which Romeo does by using the words I have italicised. The orchestra and the scene do that much better.)

The lovers meet :—

“*Juliet*.—My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words of thy tongue’s uttering, yet I know the sound;
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?”

(They then talk of the scaling of the garden walls, and more serious perils.)

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The other lovers, equally in danger :—

“ *Tristan*.—Isolde ! Beloved !

Isolde.—Tristan ! Beloved !

Art thou mine ? ”

The orchestra and the scene render a fuller greeting superfluous. The outward expression of human love is a matter in which words take an important but not the first place. “ *Tristan* ” seems to me to have superseded “ *Romeo and Juliet*,” whereas “ *The Tempest* ” has no parallel in more modern Art. In fact, if one goes through the whole range of Shakespeare’s plays comparing him with the mastery of other men, there are but few among them that have become out of date. In common with all lasting drama, “ *Tristan and Isolde* ” is based upon old legend. There are two parts of our national lore which are universal—the Graal and the *Tristan* stories.

With these two I propose to deal, holding that they are part of the essential art of Britain, whose trunk and core is Shakespeare, but whose branches widen.

He has purged the old story of its dross ; the alloy is taken away and the pure gold remains. The result is that we are willing to forget conflicting versions, and to accept

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

Wagner's drama as the true portrayal—true because it is deeper and more human than the mere echoes of tradition, which have grown distant and dim.

Think of the old story of Bretagne, that tempest of suffering and emotion that was never stilled, the great tragedy that goes from Life into Death, but comes forth again. The orchestra surges in great waves of tone, now dying into a ripple, now heaving and swelling, and at last sinking into calm.

ACT I.—A sailor is singing at the masthead, but Isolde, lying face downwards on some cushions, in the pavilion which has been erected for her, pays no heed. Her maid, Brangäne, looks through the curtains, and announces that they near the shore. Isolde rises in fury, for, throughout the voyage, Tristan, the knight who takes her to be the bride of King Marke, has refused to come to her. Up surges the wild music, and Isolde gives vent to her passion, which increases with the storm which has suddenly come upon the vessel; she cries for air, and Brangäne opens the curtains. Tristan stands among the sailors, gazing out to sea, while Kurwenal, his squire, reclines at his feet. The scene recalls memories, for Tristan had slain her lover, Morold, but being wounded his

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

friends had carried him to her, for she was magician as well as princess. His broken sword had fitted the piece which she had found in Morold's wound, and it was her intention to slay him. But Tristan's eyes betrayed his passion for her, and she had healed him. This unknown knight had now been sent to bring her as bride to his king. She hates his resolute coldness, and remembers Morold. She bids Brangäne prepare the Draught of Death. Then she summons Tristan. The orchestra dwells on the scene till the hero approaches, when it heralds him with a majestic theme, which is allied to him throughout the drama. For a moment they stand and gaze, but, when Tristan hears the nature of her thoughts, he hands her his unsheathed sword and confronts Isolde. This she refuses, for another idea has entered her mind. The draught is handed to him and for a while they gaze at each other, while the music rises like a dirge. He pledges her in the deadly cup, and drinks, but Isolde snatches the half-drained potion, and quaffs it with passionate recklessness. The music rises like incense to the memory of these lovers, who have drunk of forgetfulness, till the strings commence a tremulous theme, which is taken up by the whole orchestra. This is not Death.





Photo by D. McNeill, Stratford-upon-Avon

MR. OTHO STUART AS BRUTUS

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

Isolde opens her arms and approaches Tristan, who, step by step, responds. Brangäne has mixed a potion of Love, not Death. Free will is gone. Controlled by outer forces they rush into each other's arms, and echo in word, gesture, and embrace all that the wild pulses of the orchestra portray.

The ship is in port, and the maids of King Marke robe Isolde in her bridal dress, as soon as Kurwenal has dragged Tristan away.

ACT II.—The introduction gives a musical picture of the lovers' unrest, now that they are lit for conflagration. The curtain parts and shows the doorway of King Marke's Castle, while stretched before us is a woodland scene, with moonlight filtering through the trees and shimmering on the stream, and the air is filled with music more lovely than all the praises of poet or painter, the very growth of the beauty revealed. The sounds of hunting are introduced, and we can follow its course through the mingling of these sounds with the other music. The whole scene is voiceless till Isolde and Brangäne come forward. Isolde bids the latter extinguish the torch that blazes in the doorway, and so bid Tristan come. Brangäne fears treachery, so Isolde herself takes down the light. Then, standing in the moonlight,

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

with the intermittent sound of hunting coming to her ears, she beckons to her lover. He comes, and the music is filled with strange magic. It rises and falls, eddies, sparkles, grows overcast with portent as Love holds them in each other's arms. They sing of Night and oblivion as a land of rest, a dark casket jewelled with stars beyond the chain of sense or circumstance. In ecstasy they pass the hours till Dawn and hard reality strike them cold. And dolorous sounds come from the orchestra in place of the magic which has fled.

ACT III.—At the end we have tragedy in all its fulness. Fever burns Tristan's last embers. Delirium preys upon him. With feverish strength he pushes the stalwart squire away and rises in his bed. "The ship! the ship!" With frenzy he awaits Kurwenal's report. Not yet in sight! At last when the delirium, the burning hope, the blasting despair, have risen to their height, the shepherd pipes a merry tune. Kurwenal rushes to the eminence, descends with tears of joy: the ship is in sight. Tristan is suspicious. Is Kurwenal false too? In weakness he subsides, but rises again with madness upon him, for he has had to bear the full tide of human sorrow and

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

passion, and the meridian of pain; and the tired, burning man gives full vent to his emotion, the orchestra tossing its tone billows in harmony with the waves of delirium. He tears off his bandages and staggers from his couch, for he has heard Isolde's approach, and bids his blood flow merrily. She enters in time to support him as he falls. He has just time to breathe her name, which he does to the same phrase as in the first Act, and sinks lifeless, she helpless with grief beside him. Then another ship arrives. Brangäne has admitted her guilt, and King Marke arrives to pardon them. But Kurwenal has observed Melot among the soldiers, offers a stout resistance, and is slain, and with his last ounce of strength the faithful fellow drags himself to the body of his master. King Marke blesses them in noble, kingly phrases, while Brangäne weeps. Then rises Isolde from the corpses of Tristan and Kurwenal, like a sleepwalker gazing on untold treasure. She sings of a life beyond where she and Tristan speed through space together to some unknown land. The vibrant orchestra shows that beyond the quiet voice there is great exaltation. Her face is lit up as she glorifies the dead, and sees in death a great crescendo, a rainbow bridge

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

from here to Walhall. Slowly she bends and sinks lifeless upon her lover. For in her song has her soul gone out. So must it have been, as always in life, which demands of the great ones their all before they pass unfettered into the Land of Night. Of the miser death takes toll of his millions, of the lover his love, before they pass out alone or with a comrade.

It is said that the lovers were buried together, and that an ivy plant and a vine grew up over their tomb, and mingled together so that no man could part them, for so it was with them in life, and so in death.

So much for an outward expression of the work, but what of the feelings it engenders?

Would that all lovers newly plighted, or on their wedding day, could come under the spell! I cannot think of a phase of love which is not touched in this living dream.

Here we are not faced by "realism" or "romanticism," but we see the romance of reality.

And what is this Love?

It is not aspiration towards a freer life in a life beyond, which is a part of Divine Love. It is not a longing for human beauty, which is of the good earth. But it is born of these things. It is a realisation that man is

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

twofold, and that the union of the sexes, like the reconciliation of man to God, is a primal thing. Only where these two things are first in the consciousness of men is it possible to get forward to the freedom and the beauty we long for. When every sense is purified by spirit, when the turmoil of present-day strife has fled, man will realise that each physical sense has its spiritual counterpart, that this Hellenic view of love will lead us, not to savagery, but to the simple strength of elemental things.

Love then, stripped of all disguise of custom or warped instincts, is life's supreme end. It is a manifestation of the race spirit in this world of ours, in which body and soul seek kinship. And if this drama of Wagner is the supreme exposition of love, if in Shakespeare we find the pageants of national history, the dramas of fate and ambition, and the comedies of wit and beauty, but two sides remain to focus as it were a world's spiritual essence within the four walls of a theatre. These are :

- (a) The relation of mankind to a Saviour.
- (b) A contemporary drama, dealing with such paramount forces of our own day as are not included.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The latter I leave to the next chapter, and will deal here with "Parsifal."

For, while regarding "Tannhäuser" as a work that deserves complete production in a British theatre, "Tristan" and "Parsifal" alone are imperatively Indo-European and akin to our race in the most vital sense.

"Parsifal" is more akin than any existing work to the Mystery Play. The Passion Play at Oberammergau is a narrative, an illustration. "Parsifal" is a religious ceremony, in which the ideas of the East blend with Western conceptions.

Wagner's German Federalism expressed itself in the "Ring" cycle, his peculiarly German folk-spirit in the pageantry of "Die Meistersinger"—the German "Merry Wives of Windsor."

But in "Parsifal" he reveals a consciousness of kinship with the Indian side of our nature. Not only was the work to be Christian in idea, but a vision of Indian wisdom.

If we compare the Jewish hot-blood of "Salome" with the restraint of Wagner's last work, my meaning becomes clear.

Life is not all love and death, but the redemption must find its place in our thoughts.

The legend upon which the work is based

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE

came from the East to France, thence to Germany, where it became the subject of Wolfram von Eschenbach's great poem, and to Britain, as the legend of Peredur, the son of Evrawc (Mabinogion).

Parsifal is the pure and simple youth who brings salvation through sympathy. Amfortas, the Grail King, has been false to his race, the Grail worship no longer is a joy, but is full of the pain of inconsistency.

There is nothing in "Parsifal" to suggest that asceticism is an ideal in itself. It was decadence and impurity which brought to King Amfortas the wound that never would heal.

The story, roughly and with differences, reminds one of that of Christ Himself, and the symbolic significance of the work is inspired by the Messianic idea. For this reason it is, from the Christian and Anglo-Celtic points of view, the simplest of dramas, and one of the most necessary.

As we have seen, there is nothing of Judaic faith in the work. "Parsifal" sprang from the East, and has reappeared wherever the Indo-European race has spread. Wagner's version is simply a blending of essentials in the form of a ceremony.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The performance of such a work as an entertainment would be an outrage.

At Stratford it would be a solemn aftermath of a season traversing our history, our nature and comic traits, our love and faith.

VII

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

THE Stratford Movement grew out of Shakespeare, who was as English as the Avon, though as universal as the water which is the genius of rivers everywhere. The religious nature of the drama has been shown to us by the Greeks, and the nationalism of the Teutonic people stands out in the person and art of Richard Wagner.

So far the Memorial Theatre has opened its doors to the Orestean trilogy.

And the Governors have incorporated folk-dancing in their broad and human scheme. So that there is nothing incongruous in dealing briefly with the most popular and essentially national of all art forms, that of Choral Song.

It is the modernity, and not the mediævalism of Shakespeare, that has made the Festival possible.

But the modern stage having drifted away from normal life and the expression of living thought, the creative impulse has found

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

other outlets. Instead of Wagner we have Elgar: instead of "Parsifal" we have "The Dream of Gerontius." Instead of the rich music-drama of Germany, or the delicate fantasy of France, we have our legacy of Folk Song.

Unhappily our glorious choral music, in which alone this country excels, is confined to musical circles, choral societies, and concert-rooms. But seeing that the expression of communal feeling lies at the root of the movement, the time is growing ripe for the introduction of choral art into the Festival Scheme.

As this book is not only a record of things done, but a broad statement of the various tendencies of folk art, I will try to show what is the actual condition of choral England, and how choral art stands or might stand towards the general idea of Stratford.

The spoken drama and choral song both have their roots in the folk; they are branches of the same tree, balancing and giving proportion. In Shakespeare himself music and speech were as one, and his plays full of snatches of song natural to an age wherein music was a language to men who could barely write their names. To this day much

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

music lingers among those to whom book-learning has not come.

Men like Sir Charles Stanford, Messrs. Frank Kidson, Cecil Sharp, M'Ilwaine, John Graham, and Percy Grainger, and Miss Lucy Broadwood have rescued and published many folk-songs, bringing them from oblivion only just in time.

Though they have been brought from the country inn and from the fields, modern composers have not as yet been dominated or drenched with the power and purity of them. They are wayside flowers rather than humanity's daily food. And that is why critics like Mr. Newman laugh at the idea of national choral art, based upon the past.

Miss Neal and the Esperance Club have done a great work, while Sir Charles Stanford has encouraged the study of folk-song at the Royal College of Music. Mr. Sharp, too, controls a school, and has edited several volumes.

But only recently has folk-song begun its successful campaign at the great musical festivals, linking them up with the outworn oratorio form.

To properly appreciate this point it is necessary to give a picture of musical England, and to invest it with personality, remembering that

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

not England alone, but the Colonies, and above all the Dominion of Canada, are progressing on these lines.

With regard to the Musical Festivals of this country a few words must be said.

If we compare their nature with that of the Shakespeare Festival three things are lacking :—

(a) A common aim centring around a living idea, and definite policy.

(b) Conditions of health and open air.

(c) A popular or national tendency.

These are evils which cannot be denied.

Their virtues are :—

(a) At the Three Choir Festivals (Hereford, Gloucester, and Worcester) a certain religious tradition informs them, giving life and a reason for existence.

(b) Occasionally a City Festival (Leeds, Newcastle, or Birmingham) introduces a work of national or popular interest, as will be seen.

The first cause of the trouble is irreparable. The modern city is no place for joy and great endeavour, though it might become so if the artistic life of the city were born anew.

Alone among rural festivals is that at Hovingham. It is a country organisation, founded in 1886 by a parson, and aided by the squire—

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

two types that do not suggest democratic feeling to those who look narrowly at life. The quality of the works done at this village is not inferior to that at any of the larger ones. At present the organisation remains, but the work is in abeyance.

Leeds, Birmingham, and Cardiff also have had to face a decline in support. This is not surprising in view of the high prices, which make what are ostensibly popular festivals into society gatherings. True, they are held at different cities, but the audience is the same. Seldom do they represent either the taste or feeling of their locality. A big reputation or special aptitude at wire-pulling are qualities which too often determine the production of works. Seldom does a regard either for the peculiar merits of a work, or even the tendency of popular desire, weigh in the balance. A sort of hopeless routine maintains some of them in existence, yet they are a power, and have done much to set a standard for the numerous healthy choral societies which alone keep art alive in many a town. Yet music, the theatre, the popular "music-hall" are separate things designed to meet existing demands, and dependent upon the conditions to which unhappily they have fallen a prey.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

And if you doubt this go to a Musical Festival Committee, or a theatre, and talk to the organisers about Art and Beauty, and hear their answers from them rather than from me.

It is more fruitful to turn for a few minutes to the work achieved by composers in spite of these conditions. For those composers who have survived the obstacles which custom and narrowness of outlook have thrust before them are full of the spirit of the old bards. We have in fact a case of the survival of the fittest. The fact that they have been compelled to write for Choral Festivals and Societies has led to an amazing development of choral singing, especially in Yorkshire and Wales. When a man is writing for a fashionable opera-house or for the commercial theatre, he may indulge in many a folly. But he whose work is to be sung by and to the people must purge himself of all dross.

For music is the communal, the brotherly Art. Choral and dramatic compositions blend the emotions of a multitude, and express the ideas of the composer. One need not be a critic or an expert to enjoy the great works of our own day, for it is the business of the bard to make himself clear, and the only composers to be mentioned in this study are those who have

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

something in common with the normal feelings of human beings.

The most typical English composer is Sir Hubert Parry. His music is that of the old school, the kind of men who believe in God and do not despise good port. No one is more sound spiritually, and in few works is there a nobler conception of Life and Death than in his choral poem "Beyond these Voices there is Peace," while his "Pied Piper of Hamelin" is a work of delightful humour. Stratford, too, has "A Piper" of its own, piping the pipe of peace through all the narrow Hamelins of England, wakening into life the true folk-spirit of our real selves. And many a work of Choral England is so in harmony with the spirit of the movement as to make these notes worth writing.

The obvious leader of the modern British school is Sir Edward Elgar. The indiscriminating eulogy of those who see in him Alpha and Omega, cannot blind us to the fact that Elgar is a man who has beaten down academic tradition, and put the oratorio in touch with the people.

And it is this popular touch which alone is of any importance in Art. For here, under natural conditions, popularity loses its old

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

significance. No longer is the word "popular" a gibe, standing in the handcuffs of inverted commas, but signifying the approval of a people who know how to enjoy.

The technique of Elgar is very wonderful. He learnt much from Wagner, and also from Richard Strauss. Indeed, he owes to Strauss the second hearing, and consequent success, of his great work, "The Dream of Gerontius." The Birmingham Festival production was a failure. Elgar himself is not one of those men to become popular in a moment. But the work was given at the Lower Rhine Festival, Düsseldorf, 1902, and Strauss made a speech which caused musical England to be thoroughly ashamed of itself, and gave Elgar his real opportunity.

Those who have neither heard nor read the work will have gathered that it deals with Death, and that the music is difficult to sing and to understand. At the end of a hard day's work this is so. I first heard it under those conditions, and had to travel to and fro over sixty miles. Every throb of the great poem beats within me yet. Yet how much better would it be in the twilight of golden holiday, with peace upon the river, and silence in the theatre of our dreams.

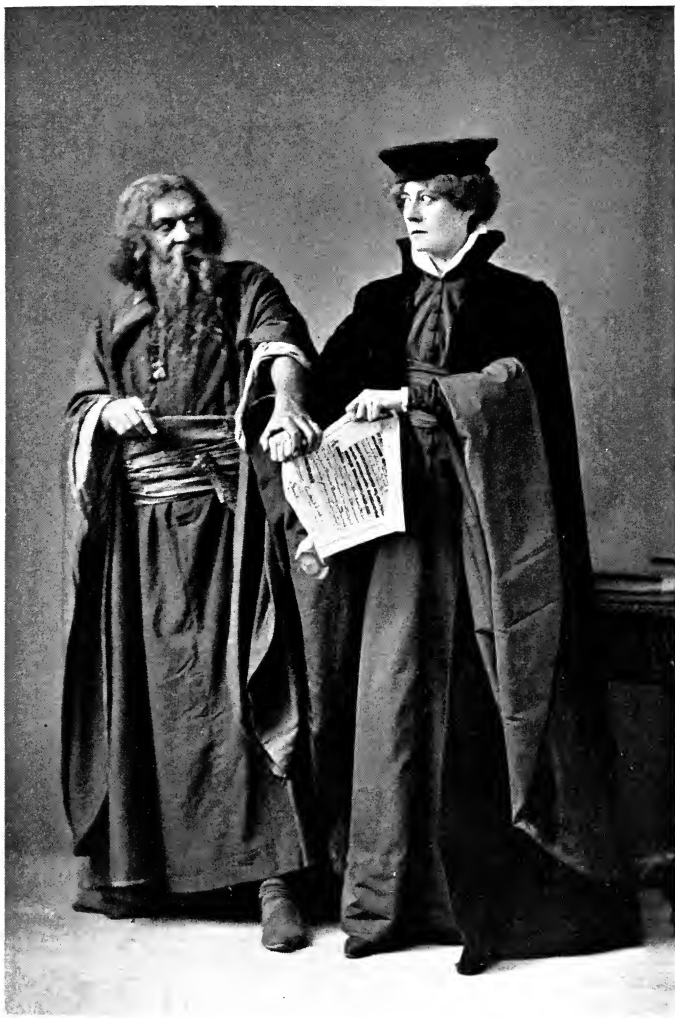


Photo by Ellis & Walery

MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER AS SHYLOCK AND MISS VIOLET
VANBRUGH AS PORTIA

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

Nor can those of us who regard national art as a vital thing ignore "Caractacus," produced at the Leeds Festival of 1904. It is great because it deals with one of our national heroes, and the music is that of a strong man, who burns with faith, in whose own soul conflict between Christianity and Paganism has been fought, and whose art is the soul's battle-ground. That is why the great, thundering choruses of "Caractacus" go straight home. And it is because "King Olaf" lacks this quality that it is merely a picturesque piece of music.

Again, Elgar is a Catholic, a man who believed in Gordon, and who, like the hero of Khartum, combines a noble faith with good fighting qualities. Gordon's favourite poem was Cardinal Newman's "Dream of Gerontius," the wonderful vision that tells of the soul of a man, seemingly dead, arriving before the throne of the great King in judgment. Gordon died with that poem in his pocket. Elgar lived, and will live for ever as composer, because he expressed in music the atmosphere of the poem, and is able to plunge a chorus, an orchestra, and an audience into a sublime state of subconscious actuality. And when Elgar writes "Pomp and Circumstance" military marches, or sets to music drawing-room songs, it is all

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

very well, and when he composes a great symphony or a new violin concerto it is a festive day for musical people. But it is as the bard of Caractacus and as the priest of Gerontius that he will live.

Elgar too has been exercised as to the future of music as a general rather than a specialised art. His proposal, amplified a little by me for purposes of illustration, is something like this :—

Let the money that is wasted on stupid certificates and scholarships be spent in providing concert-halls. Let those concert-halls be fitted with a proscenium, so that, in case of need, musico-dramatic works can be performed. The English temperament prefers choral to purely orchestral or operatic work ; therefore, these public "music-halls" must not be mere theatres. But let them be so arranged that the following types of work may be produced :

(a) Choral works, varying from "Gerontius" to "Hiawatha," the soloists wearing simple gowns rather than the costume of the modern dance or dinner party.

(b) Cantatas like Handel's "L'Allegro."

(c) Wagner's dramas and Greek plays with music, also British music-drama, beginning

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

with Purcell, produced as upon the ordinary stage, only better.

If this is at all his idea, Sir Edward has given voice to a general feeling, by no means out of harmony with Stratford.

For one of the features of London music in 1910 was Madame Marie Brema's production of Purcell's "Orpheus" and Handel's "L'Allegro."

Now the "Allegro," which is, of course, a setting of Milton's poem (combined with alternating passages from "Penseroso"), is full of scenic suggestion and beauty, though produced hitherto as a mere "cantata." Madame Brema has boldly staged it, and never, save at Bayreuth, have I seen a work more satisfying. The absence of the stale operatic lust and nonsense, instead of causing a lack of interest, creates a natural and human atmosphere unusual in the theatre. Handel no more seems dull, nor Milton's muse remote, because the joy of rustic dance alternates with spiritual beauty in the stage picture. It is English to the core, a veritable Folk Festival.

Too long has choral England left a gap between oratorio and opera. Both are unnatural. Elijah in evening dress is as absurd a spectacle as the conspirators in "Rigoletto,"

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

who roar at one another "Let us be silent." Nothing could be more natural than to see Milton's "pensive nun" and his jolly English dancers realise upon the stage the simple beauty of the work. Truly, one may say "Hence, loathèd melancholy."

And in Gluck's "Orpheus" this was even more the case. The legend of Orpheus deals with the idea of Music as a power on earth, in heaven, and in the dismal cave where dwell the Furies, all the untamed bestialities of life. Angrily they threaten Orpheus, who gradually quells their torment and sings them back to human feeling again. Never shall I forget that scene, wherein a tortuous forest of writhing limbs dumbly proclaimed bodily unrest, while the air was full of the torment of souls in sound. And this legend of Orpheus has much akin to the tales of Oisín, the Irish hero, sung by Mr. Yeats.

I mention this Greek play, partly because the union of Greek feeling in the art of our people tends to emphasise the Greek elements of Christianity. Recent research confirms the belief that Christ Himself spoke Greek, and therefore is by no means to be considered as Judaistic. St. Paul frankly proclaimed himself as a citizen of the Roman Imperium, while his

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

culture was Greek, his teaching, too, being full of Hellenic ideas. This question is important to us as a race, for the belief that we are essentially Jewish in religion, basing our conceptions upon Jewish tradition, prevents a full value being given to our own national customs and natural ideals in art and life. But another practical object in referring to Madame Brema's experiment. In his book on "Musical England" (p. 112), Mr. W. G. Galloway pleads for a broader policy on the part of Musical Festivals. He would have them include in their programmes both dramatic works and so-called oratorios and choral poems. Bristol has gone so far as to perform Wagnerian drama without scenery, but no further response has come or is to be expected.

The unhappy divorce between music and drama is seen in yet another way, exemplified by the mediæval play "Everyman," the dramatic version of which has been produced by Mr. Poel and others. This was the subject of Dr. Walford Davies' first great choral work (Leeds Festival, 1904), and both in its atmosphere and simple strength is one of the greatest works written by a Briton.

Here is a clear case of power lost by separated effort. We have an oratorio and

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

a spoken play instead of a united effort such as would have resulted had the various arts had common centres and a unified public.

If Stratford should encourage choral work, and meet with encouragement to do so, our Musical Festivals themselves would gather much useful knowledge by the experiment, which they could develop in their own cities.

Having seen what the Festivals have done for music, and in an oblique and obscure way for drama (without scenery), let us glance at the fate of poetry amid all this specialisation.

Apart from the old oratorio, which is simply drama marred in the making, the modern composer can do two things which the dramatist cannot attempt, and which supplements the drama on the one side as does dancing on the other :—

- (a) The setting of narrative poems for chorus and orchestra.
- (b) The setting of poems to expressive music.

In these arts, especially in the latter, Elgar, Bantock, Stanford, and Walford Davies excel.

Walford Davies, for instance, has more of the poet about him than Elgar, as the choice of Blake's "Songs of Innocence" and Herrick's "Noble Numbers" indicates.

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

Stanford excels as an arranger of folk-song, with the brogue peculiar to his native Ireland.

People do not read poetry nowadays. They shrink from the imaginative effort. And, in view of the beauty of our poems, it is a fortunate thing that our composers are good readers of poetry. Granville Bantock's study is full of poems. "The Time Spirit" and "Sea Wanderers," by Helen Bantock, are the very life of the choral works which her husband has developed from them. There is nothing of the minor poet about her : she is capable of restraint, of "mood," which are the foundation of choral or dramatic poetry. And these works, especially the latter, which was first performed at Leeds Festival (1907), enable thousands of people to hear poetry, not merely to sit at home and read it.

Then again his "Sappho Songs" (for contralto) are among the loveliest of their kind. Founded upon fragments of Sappho's poems, translated by H. T. Wharton, Granville Bantock has made them the medium of a series of mood pictures, showing the varying colours of sexual passion. They are pure, noble utterances, varying from brooding reminiscence, as in "I loved thee, Atthis, long ago," through the beautiful sorrow of the "Lament for

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Adonis," to the victorious and joyful rhapsody of the lover who finds a mate.

But the wider public regards Bantock as the creator of the choral and orchestral setting of Fitzgerald's "Omar Kháyyám." The value of this work can never be known until it has been set upon the stage, each of its three parts an Act, in a garden scene of languorous afternoon. The composer wisely has divided the quatrains dramatically between the Poet, the Beloved, and the Philosopher, leaving the descriptive parts to the chorus. Under Stratford conditions a work of this kind, though not a play in the ordinary sense, would provide us with a delightful "static drama." Concert conditions are most unsatisfactory with such a work.

The restful atmosphere of the garden, and the special qualities of the philosophy have never been fully understood. No less a nationalist than Professor Geddes has emphasised the value of Omar to the Western mind. For it must never be forgotten that we are of Aryan stock, that the Indo-European race links East and West.

If our politicians were more alive to that the race difficulties in India would dwindle to nothing.

Our mixture with the Semites, noble though

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

the Jews be among races, has blinded us to our common heritage, along with Eastern peoples, to be found in Eastern legend and thought. But until, as a race, we are more self-conscious, we cannot come back to the Eastern home of Old Father Wisdom.

Our own immediate forbears claim us through the art which is within our immediate grasp, the song of the Anglo-Celts.

Since Purcell, 1690, with his "Dido and Æneas" and "King Arthur," we have had no true national style. Music has been too much a matter of abstract culture, too little a means of expressing popular feeling. Yet in these days, with life so complex, with large orchestras and choral societies everywhere; with a world so full of joy and sorrow; in the midst of political change, with the air tremulous with national anxieties; surely the time has come for the bard to lead national feeling, and to bring courage and hope into the people's life. The great public is tired of lust, horror, and stupidity on the operatic stage. Nor does it desire dull, trite, academic twistings of the Scriptures in the choral works of uninspired professors.

In the old times folk-song was the very life of the country, the vocal expression of Merrie

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

England, in the days of the dance and the maypole. Therefore the modern composer is right in turning again to the popular folk-song. To bring the folk-song from the public-house of the countryside into the public hall of the Choral Society is a sound basis for a national art. By this I do not mean that any musician who writes an elaborate and windy orchestral piece, based upon tunes stolen from the library of a collector of folk-music, is saving his country.

When Rutland Boughton produced his "Choral Variations on English Folk Songs" at the Leeds Festival (1907), I had never heard of him. And it was through Mr. Bantock's cordial praise that I came into touch with his ideas, and into contact with his work—to bring music into the hospitals, the prisons, and the workhouses, as well as the theatre.

Therefore one may take him seriously when he sets folk-songs for choruses, avowedly for the purpose of bringing people together in a brotherly way, through the Arts.

His method of setting works for unaccompanied chorus is on the same free, melodic lines as Elgar's orchestral writing.

After the success of the Leeds folk-songs the Birmingham Festival of 1909 accepted his

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

setting of Edward Carpenter's poem, "A Song at Midnight." This is quite as rhythmical as the songs, but set for full orchestra and chorus. And it is a musical version of a poem treating directly of the conditions of modern life. It deals in a human way with the sweated needle-woman, using up her last bit of candle; with the agonies of the sick, with the remorse of evil-doers; with the clangour of bells tolling the hours of darkness away, ringing the knell of a night of social horror. But this Rembrandt-like composition is lit with hope. The music and the voices of singers proclaim the advance of tramping millions, marching through the night with the joyful hope of dawn.

"These are they who dream the impossible dream," is the burden of this great canticle of social regeneration.

Certain features of this led to the conception of a new dramatic form, Choral Drama, in which the idea of the Greek chorus is united with the orchestra. This of course clears away the difficulty that besets lyrical drama.

The chorus represents the people, and stands as it were between the audience and the principal characters, combining the descriptive power of massed voices with the individual nature of the legendary heroes.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Now I believe that when our choral forces join with the dramatic in visualising and vocalising the great sagas of our people, a truly Shakespearean development will have stepped in.

While the composers whom I have mentioned are in my opinion typical of this popular tendency, there are many others whom I have included in other studies, but of whom space forbids mention here.

For instance, Dr. Vaughan Williams, in his *Sea Symphony*, no less than in folk-song variations, is a power for good.

Francis Toye in the *Boxford Masque*, and men who, like Mr. Shann at Bury St. Edmunds, organise village masques or pageants, are typical of others who all over the country are stirring the embers and kindling the fires of national consciousness anew.

But the difficulties, indeed the apathy with which my inquiries have been met, emphasise the need for the centralising of all these forces and the keeping of a central record.

So far the isolated worker in the water-tight compartments of specialised Arts has had no means of conferring and working with his fellows.

Now I do not suggest that the Shakespeare

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

Memorial Festival should become a choral meeting. But I believe that, by incorporating in the scheme representative works such as I have outlined, new blood and new energy would be drawn into the Movement. The Choral North would come to the Avon banks, and their picked festival choruses could speak to our hearts in a language that we understand. And they in turn would form the audience for alternating Shakespearean and Greek dramatic works, and the sedentary art of choral singing would find interplay perhaps in Folk Dancing, or at least in witnessing the dancing in the open air.

Instead of all working separately with their own publics and methods they would regard Stratford as a clearing-house of English Art, and of Art more than English.

For Canada above all cousin states has taken song for her Dominion. Dr. Harris with his Canadian chorus, with his frankly national programmes, could draw tighter those bonds of love that are forged by the Song God. The music of Macdowell, America's greatest composer, could unite with that of Elgar in a new way.

Australia, rich in singers and poets; New Zealand, truly a land of zeal, would be there.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Indeed, from the Seven Seas would come the tribes to be sealed at Stratford.

That unity of race which has marked out Judaism among the nations, would set the Anglo-Celtic peoples, the Indo-European race at common cause.

And I would have the reader remember that, in the past, the Dane, the Norman, and the Teuton have come into our midst as a result of feud and of battle. But I believe that the fusion of the future will be not "of garments rolled in blood," but with the power of song, and by the sword of the spirit. And, while the politician may hope to bind with a bond metallic, the artist looks to the heart-strings.

Wherever this book wanders, from the very heart of England's Stratford goes the race-spirit, which is Love—to you. Nor can you escape it. If the bloodhound's scent be strong, how much stronger the kinship that comes down the ages.

And as you read it, especially Indians, who do not know the kinship between our Arthurian cycle with your Ramayana, remember before the cosmopolitan spirit has widened the breach.

Nationalism not only reaches to the heart of India, and finds a homeland on every shore of

CHORAL ART AND THE THEATRE

the Seven Seas, but goes deep down into the past, to the first gleaming hopes of the race before we became tribes, before we began to forget each other as do brothers who have lived long in distant lands.

The Movement has reached a stage which demands development.

Imperial Federation is in the air, yet never was there a time when Little England was so essentially the homeland of a great people.

Municipal reform expresses itself through the universities, by means of architectural training and the art of civic design, complemented with the efforts of garden cities and town-planning schemes.

Beauty is becoming a part of our practical politics, as in "the spacious days of great Elizabeth," a phrase no longer hackneyed if we care to give it a meaning.

The time has come to speak out: to say to the singers and players of England, "The Round Table is spread"; to the dramatists, "The Sword of Power that was Shakespeare's is set in the stone four-square. Let him that is king among you draw it forth!" to the educationists, "Behold in Stratford all that England can do in the way of Art. Let the children see and hear, that, when they be

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

grown-up, they may be an understanding people, with joy and beauty in their hearts, and with love for us"; to the sages of England, "Come here for your councils"; and to the workmen, "Here is a place where men have laboured for your joy. Rest from your toil beholding theirs."



Photo by C. Histed

MR. OSCAR ASCHE AS OTHELLO

VIII

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

ART can be practical without precept. A coal-scuttle well wrought in bronze may be as useful as a zinc tub without in any way pointing a moral or otherwise destroying its beauty.

And if we take all the Arts separately they have their uses.

The architect who built a house that could not be inhabited would stand in the same relation to his art as the dramatist who produced a work which the common mind could not comprehend.

Beauty is the first principle of Art, but fitness for its purpose is a postulate without which we could not go far.

In the earlier part of this book we have dealt with the physical arts of Song and Dance developing into the communal Art of Drama.

And in comparing various phases and forms we have seen that a social quality therein determined their interest both for us and for those taking part in them.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

Architecture is the body of communal art, as is drama its soul.

Dramatic creation gives the conception of beauty, awakens the emotions, and guides us through all the regions of passion and peace.

Architecture is able to build a home for the lover ; a workshop for the worker ; a temple for the worshipper ; and a theatre for the dreams of a community.

Therefore it seems to me that in some way Stratford-upon-Avon should, by means of Congresses or Exhibitions, focus at her national fount this dramaturgy in stone upon which the outward form of our future must depend. This seems the more desirable seeing that the place of the theatre in modern civic life is not understood.

If Stratford-upon-Avon is to be more than a dramatic Spa we must also evolve something in the way of a University of the Arts, where in the most pleasurable way ideas may be gathered of the kind of city which the future holds for us.

Shakespeare certainly was no sociologist. But it was not without an object that he gave us "The Tempest" with its types of Prospero, Caliban, Trinculo, and Gonzalo. The forces at work in our midst are Idealism, Animalism

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

(or Sin), and Flabbyism, the half-baked slippery thing which is neither in earnest nor entirely gross.

In the world to-day we have a great many Calibans; the Trinculos and Stephanos abound; while Prosperos are few.

Surely Shakespeare himself was Prospero, and in his other characters was consciously symbolising the qualities of his own day. There is no sign of allegory in "The Tempest," but the grouping of characters: Ferdinand and Miranda, the primal pair of a period; Caliban making the air reek with his grossness while Ariel tunes it to perfumed loveliness; Gonzalo, who knows all about it, and the drinkers who do not care a button: these are social types, not personal characters, such as Falstaff, nor dramatisations of Fate, Passion, or Perversity.

But they are no more the results of conscious and deliberate artifice than was Wagner's "Tristan" or Mr. John Galsworthy's "Justice," which caused Mr. Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, to alter the prison code. Mr. Galsworthy, who, with Masfield and others, is of modern dramatists the most Shakespearean, takes such subjects as "Strife" or "Justice," and gives you the ramifications of the central passion, as it flows red through the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

veins of living man. He does not take sides, but lets such questions as Capital *versus* Labour and the prison question provide the dramatic interest of his plays.

And I take Galsworthy as a type because he never lays down the law. He is neither a preacher who has mistaken his profession nor an aimless æsthete wasting his own time and ours. He has proved that the life of our own day may be dramatic.

Masefield, too, in his "Pompey the Great," has succeeded in writing a Roman play, which is topical to-day. The problems of Rome and the humanities of Romans are interesting to us in so far as they were true to their time. There is no cold classicalism about it; the writing is rhythmic without formality; and the use of the sailor's chanty in the great concluding scene reminds one not only that John Masefield has been a sailor and is a poet, but that the Greek Chorus can be reborn to us in many forms and with perfect results. The historical drama did not die with Shakespeare, and politics to-day differ only from those of ancient Rome in scene and setting.

In treating such a question as the practicality of Art there is a danger of offending both sides. If one say that the drama is a pleasurable

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

interest, not a method of teaching, the earnest man is disappointed. And when one turns to the dissolute dabblers who have spoiled the contemporary stage, they meet one with the cry, "Drama is an amusement, not a source of education."

What is the truth?

The plain facts are these:—

(a) The habitual amusement of our deformed and defiled cities no longer is pleasurable to normal people; nor would it have found favour in any robust or intellectual age.

(b) But, along with town-planning and housing reform, folk-dancing and the awaking patriotism of the race, new conditions of life are coming into being, and Pleasure and Art once more are coming together.

That town-planning, the Shakespearean drama, folk-art, and the race-spirit are not separate subjects, but one and indivisible; and that the Arts differ only in method, but all are meant to express the health and joy of man, is no isolated opinion.

Professor Geddes, both in his writings and lectures, in his work for the Dunfermline civic experiments, and in his exhibits at the Outlook Tower, Edinburgh, was among the first to co-ordinate these various phases into one

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

subject. And Mr. Brassington, the Memorial Librarian, is a strong advocate of a University of the Arts.¹

If the reader should be sceptical as to a new order of civic life a few historical facts would not come amiss.

I repeat that the drama must not preach regeneration, but itself must be regenerate as the expression and the inspiration of practical effort. Hence the relationship to town-planning. In 1902 the villages of Letchworth, Norton, and Willian contained about 700 inhabitants. A company was formed to take over the estate and to realise the ideas of a city which Mr. Ebenezer Howard had set out in his "Garden Cities of To-morrow." His scheme was, briefly, as follows:—

(a) To erect good houses and cottages, each with its plot of land.

(b) To encourage manufactories, which were to be restricted to a certain area, separate from the residential part.

(c) To bind the whole together in a unified and organic way by an agricultural belt.

¹ These I mention, among others, to disclaim originality in the matter. And Mr. Benson, of whom I cannot speak freely in this volume, comprehends this essential unity of life.—R. R. B.

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

This plan was so worked out that overcrowding became impossible, and, when the population has grown to about 30,000, development will cease.

By the end of 1910 about 7500 inhabitants were established there with more than twenty factories of various kinds, including printing works, a tapestry guild, and the Icení pottery. Nor was this all.

Being its own landlord the Company could enforce a decent regard for health and beauty.

The inhabitants, many of them attracted to the place as a possible field for social and artistic experiment, set great store by the drama.

Not only does their Dramatic Society produce plays of the better kind, but each year a local pantomime, in the form of a satire upon their own social experiment, has enlivened the place. Letchworth Garden City is a standing proof that the city as we know it is not an ordinance of Providence, but a temporary phase, born of accident and misdirected energy. Letchworth provides an example of a new, organic community, springing up, not from accident, but as the result of a preconceived plan.

At Knebworth Lord Lytton is developing a garden city on similar lines, while garden suburbs are growing up all over the country.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

At Bournville and Port Sunlight large manufacturers have grouped similar communities around their works, thus bringing healthy conditions within the means of their employees.

I admit that these experiments are social and architectural rather than dramatic.

But, with a well-ordered society, public taste will awaken to the finer and more delightful aspects of life.

Of course, being modern and without any central tradition and guide, these new cities are not destined to be centres of national gatherings, stimulating though they certainly are. And this is where practical and ideal unite.

Unless I am much mistaken civic design, including agricultural and artistic development, will find its fulfilment at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Apart from the Theatre the development of Stratford naturally would be upon the lines of Professor Geddes' "Study in City Development." For, not being a garden city, but a borough with a great tradition and natural beauty, nothing is needed save the carrying out of the few suggestions which follow.

The Grammar School of King Edward VI. can trace its actual origin to the Ancient Guild of the Holy Cross, before 1269. This Guild

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

was threatened by Henry VIII. but escaped suppression, being however reconstituted in the next reign. This fact would be known to Shakespeare before he conceived his "Henry VIII.," and probably was not forgotten in writing it,

The Parish Church, close to the river, marks the resting-place of Shakespeare and maintains its spiritual uses. Its cruciform shape, the old sanctuary knocker, and memorials of names well known in the spacious days of the last great revival of national and artistic feeling, bind us to the past.

Nor does the Theatre stand alone. With it are the Picture Gallery and Library.

And near the Theatre stands the great statue and monument by Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower.

Thus we have the elements of civic life: the School, Church, Library, Picture Gallery, and Theatre.

So that in suggesting that Stratford should be, more than it is, a Festival place and Folk-Meet for the race, the claim is not made without the existence of the elements essential to such an idea. Many cities have these things, but nowhere else has been so favoured by fortune, nor is there any borough in England

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

that combines to this degree the essential qualities of city and country.

How far Stratford can go on garden city lines is a matter of detail for its burgesses.

But its artistic development depends upon the ability of national scholars and artists to render it as unsurpassable as Venice in her splendour; and upon the capacity of the people for pleasure, and for labour.

One of Professor Geddes' most fruitful ideas is that each town or city should so organise the playful energy of boys as to get them to construct a primitive village. If, with the guidance of a practical and scholarly man, they dig the cave of the troglodyte and build the primitive hut, they will have made a valuable study in sociology. For from the early activities of mankind they can be led in magic succession from point to point. Thus will they be educated.

Gradually a village could be built, revealing the origin and practice of handicrafts.

An Art Museum, and a Rock Garden for the proper study of geology and botany, could be evolved. Thus would Stratford become of enormous educational interest to the people.

Professor Geddes goes so far as to suggest the organisation of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. donkey rides, so that

THE PRACTICALITIES OF ART

the healthy pleasures of the seaside also could be enjoyed. A sand-pit would extend this idea. So there is no reason why the children should not see "The Piper" and Shakespeare under festival conditions.

In fact, there is no joy in life or useful knowledge that could not well be grafted upon the existing organisations of this God-given town.

Support can be given by the simple means of spending holidays there, or by endowment of some special feature.

The Theatre is bound by its articles to divide no profits, but to use them for development. Like the School or Church it is not a speculative enterprise.

And when one thinks of what Andrew Carnegie has done for Dunfermline by putting into practice Professor Geddes' ideas and his own, it seems certain that in good time Stratford will be able to show the world a system of organised beauty that will purify the life of the many cities that may follow the example.

For instance, a social club, furnished simply to represent the art and economy of the home, would set a standard for all who saw it, while the living drama and calm beauty of the place would stimulate the intellect and emotions, so

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

that souls dimmed by civilisation would find themselves become not copyists but original and individual men and women.

Viewed solely as a place of summer-holiday, in which the delights of Shakespearean art mingle with the pleasures of mediæval memory and the exhilaration of sunlight and fresh air, Stratford-upon-Avon makes a strong appeal.

But how much more alluring is the Piper's tune, the spell that lures grown-ups and children along the bright ways of Art!

And those of us who love the name of Shakespeare, and hear his full tone best in the place of his birth, see more than this.

For where men meet in brotherhood there begins a strong peace and a blood-pact. The spirit of the Folk-Meet binds us and we are one people, bound by a common Fatherhood and a mutual joy.

And our dreams, whether of Life or the living Art, become holy, and our aims gain a common purpose, for England is the heart of the Anglo-Celtic people, and Stratford England's heart, beating with all the loyal love which is ours to give and to gain.

FOLK ART

BY MARY NEAL

I

THE STRATFORD - UPON - AVON FESTIVAL MOVEMENT AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS

No more suitable spot could have been chosen for a theatre devoted to such ideals as those of the Shakespearean Memorial than Stratford-upon-Avon. Alike for the beauty of the little old-world town and of its surrounding country, and for its associations as the birthplace of Shakespeare, it is beloved on both sides of the Atlantic, and makes an ideal meeting-ground for all the English-speaking people.

The Theatre is built in the midst of a beautiful garden on the banks of the river Avon. Time has already mellowed its walls and begun to cover them with ivy and trailing greenery. At Stratford, on a summer's day, with the Theatre doors open on to the river, radiant in sunshine, and with its pollard willows making a delicate green shadow, and with one's ears full of the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse, one might well be back in the days when men saw

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

in all beauty, whether of colour or sound or movement, some symbol of the gods they worshipped. And there is no jar between the play inside its walls and the surroundings in which one can walk between the acts and after the play is over, all is so different from the crowded city street into which so many theatres open in other places. Here all is peaceful and idyllic, and helpful to the best understanding of our national drama.

This means that in the very heart of England, close not only to the countryside with its rural traditions but to the manufacturing towns, not less intrinsically part of the national life, is a theatre, intended by its founders to keep alive the love of all that is most characteristic of English dramatic art.

The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre (to give its official and registered title) is owned and managed by an Association of Governors, the chief part of the practical work being in the hands of a committee of management. The Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon is represented *ex officio* among the Governors by the Mayor and six aldermen, and the remainder of the body is composed of people of position in the county or the borough, or of eminence in literature, art, or the drama.



Photo by Ellis & Walery

MR. HENRY AINLEY AS ROMEO



THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

In addition to the actual Theatre, the Shakespeare Memorial comprises also a Library and Picture Gallery, both of which contain much that is of special interest to those who visit Stratford-upon-Avon, as well as a tower, from the top of which can be seen the country, the villages, and the distant hills which Shakespeare knew from boyhood to his last years.

The Library and the very comfortable Reading-room are on the ground floor. The Memorial Library contains some 10,000 books and pamphlets, including several of the early quartos and all the first four folios, 1623, 1632, 1664, and 1685. Here, too, is Garrick's own copy of Rowe's edition, 1709; and here are nearly all the collected editions ever published in the English language, including some of the now very scarce early American editions. Here is also a unique collection of translations of Shakespeare into foreign tongues, some thirty languages, including many Indian dialects, Japanese and Chinese, being represented. Truly a wonderful collection, a wonderful tribute to the genius of the greatest of Englishmen.

Other valuable books of Shakespeareana, dramatic history, English drama, local topography, heraldry, archæology, and general

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

reference add to the interest of the collection, and all these works may be studied by any one who procures a reader's ticket from the Librarian.

The Library has a small endowment, besides a special fund raised by the present Librarian ; but, of course, any bequests or donations of money or of books required are welcome, and such a gift is no bad way of linking the donor with the town and memory of Shakespeare. The Reading-room is open to visitors, and the Memorial Librarian, Mr. W. Salt Brassington, F.S.A., is always ready to give students and inquirers the benefit of his learning and advice. Without further description it may be said that the Library is one in which the Shakespearean student will find all that he can desire.

The Picture Gallery contains some notable paintings. First there is the famous portrait of William Shakespeare, painted on a panel in the Italian style and dating from the early part of the seventeenth century ; it is quite possible that this is the original of the Martin Droeshout engraving which appears opposite the title-page in the first folio of the plays (1623). The portrait is painted on two planks of old English elm, prepared with white plaster,

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

primed red, and bearing in the top left-hand corner the inscription, "William Shakespeare, 1609." This picture has been pronounced, on the unimpeachable authority of leading connoisseurs, to be a genuine early seventeenth century painting. That it represents the same man as the engraving in the first folio no one can doubt. The only question on which scholars disagree is this: Was the engraving made from the picture, or was the picture painted from the engraving?

Other portraits of Shakespeare here collected are a photograph of the Droeshout engraving, the "Venice" portrait, the "Jacob Tonson" portrait, the "Willett" portrait, the D'Avenant bust—a copy of the original in the Garrick Club, London, which was discovered in 1845 bricked up in the wall of the old "Duke's Theatre" in Lincoln's Inn Fields—and the "Napier" portrait; while at the foot of the stairs stands a copy of the statue of 1740 in Westminster Abbey by Kent and Scheemakers. It need hardly be said that none of these have the authority of the Droeshout engraving and portrait, or of the bust on the monument in Holy Trinity Church.

In view of the excellence of the catalogue, we must resist the temptation to linger over

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

the hundreds of drawings, paintings, engravings, miniatures, and relics of Shakespearean scenes and characters, of famous actors and actresses, of dead and bygone productions, which the generosity of students, scholars, players, and Shakespeareans of England, Europe, and America has brought together within these walls. The collection is increasing in importance and size every year, and the problem of space will soon become a serious one.

A stone's-throw from the original group of buildings of the Memorial there is also a Lecture-room, which has a small stage for the purposes of lectures, recitals, or concerts. This hall is used as a club-room for visitors during the annual Festivals, and as a gallery for the exhibition of pictures on loan.

Of the actual record of Shakespearean and other performances given in the course of the thirty-four years' existence of the Memorial Theatre, some account has already been given in the opening chapter of this volume, but the present brief consideration of the varied interests grouped around the several departments of the Memorial building brings us back appropriately to the subject of the annual Shakespeare Festival. Every year, for three weeks,

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

beginning as near as possible to April 23 (St. George's Day, and the traditional day of Shakespeare's birth), Stratford-upon-Avon holds a festival of Shakespeare which is attended by numbers of visitors from all parts of England, and not a few from other parts of the Empire, from the United States and the countries of Europe. If the reader were to find himself in Bridge Street on the morning of the opening day of a Festival, he would see it a brilliant avenue of flags, banners, shields, and decorations, some made in Stratford and given from afar. At the head of the street stands the flagstaff bearing the huge Union Jack presented by the King. Near it is the flag of Wales, presented by the Prince of Wales, and the long line of flagstaffs down the wide street bears the standards also of Scotland, Ireland, the Colonies, and all the King's dominions beyond the seas, and of all the nations of the world, all presented by their official representatives in England. The shields of all nations are here too, for Shakespeare is the world's property and all peoples combine to do him honour. At one minute to the hour appointed all these flags are still furled; but round them are grouped the ambassadors or other representatives of various countries

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

who have come to take part in the Festival; and as the clock strikes each pulls the cord which looses his country's flag to the breeze. Simultaneously the band strikes up, and the crowd of spectators, the boys from the Grammar School, and the children of the town join in the National Anthem.

On April 23, which is celebrated as the poet's birthday, a procession passes along the gaily decorated streets, each of which bears its particular message expressed in its colours and designs, down to the Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, where Shakespeare was baptized and where he lies buried. Flowers are here in profusion, for when the brief service, with its address and its music, is over, every visitor present will place a wreath or a bouquet, be it only a school-child's bunch of flowers, on the tomb of Shakespeare. On the way back from the Church the visitor will probably fall in with the famous troop of morris-dancers from a neighbouring village, with their quaint costumes hung with bells and their gaily beribboned knees and hats, dancing with unflagging energy a dance in which Shakespeare himself may often have joined, a dance that, in its origin and symbolism, goes back to time immemorial. In the afternoon there is a

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

reception at the Town Hall by the Shakespeare Club, at which the Mayor acts as host; and the town is *en fête* all day until night comes and it is time to go to the Theatre.

In recent years there has been established an annual exhibition of works of art, household utensils and furniture, tapestry, and curios illustrating mediæval and Elizabethan times, or of some special play of the period. These exhibitions, it is hoped, will eventually become a Folk Museum in which will be traced the agricultural, industrial, and artistic life of England from earliest times until the present day.

Old English sports hold a place during the Festival, and include wrestling, quarter-staff, single-stick, fencing, skipping, and old English dancing.

On May Day a special Festival for the children of Stratford-upon-Avon and the surrounding district has been arranged by Mrs. F. R. Benson, and there are those who think this one of the most charming attractions of the whole Festival. Mrs. Benson loves the children, and understands that they must dance and sing out of the joy of their hearts if it is to be a real May Festival and not a mere spectacle for grown-up folks or an extra lesson for the children. The coming of

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

May Day is a sign for a well-known dancer to appear and fiddle for the children of Stratford and of Ilmington, the latter following him as the children followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin. He regards himself as "Mrs. Benson's friend," and nothing would keep him from helping her in the May Day revel. Down the street the children dance, and into the Theatre gardens, where the Festival takes place.

It is not necessary to enlarge on the value of the work done during all these years in connection with the Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon by Mr. F. R. Benson. The townsfolk of Stratford showed their appreciation of it in 1910 when he was presented with the freedom of the city as a token of their loyalty to him and to his ideals. This is a distinction which has not been accorded to any one since the day when Garrick received the same honour.

It is three hundred years since there was incarnated in the personality of Shakespeare all England's best ideals of national life, and, since these were manifested in his dramas, we, to-day, are beginning to understand what these dramas mean, and to perceive to what high purpose his art can be made to serve

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

both as a means of education and of recreation, and as an instrument for keeping alive in towns and villages the traditions and memories of heroes and of heroic deeds.

We believe that the work of the Memorial Theatre will be much enlarged as its purpose is better understood and more widely known.

From it will come the representation of classic and modern drama that will set the note of England's best achievement; and attached to it will be a School of Acting, to belong to which will be a guarantee of excellence of technique and of the possession of true artistic gifts.

Thus the Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare Memorial Theatre will stand in the future as it has done in the past for an intelligent and perceptive patriotism, having a due appreciation of all that is best in the past history of our race and of all that is most worth encouraging in the future, which is still ours to mould as we will.

In May 1909 a meeting was held in the Memorial Picture Gallery at Stratford-upon-Avon to consider the possibility of making the work of the Theatre and of the Festival better known.

Plans were also made for a second Festival,

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

which has since been successfully inaugurated, in July and August, for the convenience of those who for various reasons could not attend in April and May, and also for visitors from the Colonies, the United States, and other countries.

It was also felt that the time had come when an attempt should be made to gather round the Theatre those who in various ways were working in the interests of art and who perceived in dancing, music, song, and games those regenerative forces which were helping to restore to the English people their inheritance of joy and of strength, so long held in abeyance through the invading evils of overcrowded city life.

The late Mr. Edward Burrows, one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, was present. He had long been a warm supporter of all that would lead to a fuller and happier life for the children in our schools, and had been one of the first to welcome the revival of folk-song and dance, and to realise its value as an educative and recreative force.

Mr. F. R. Benson reminded those present that the original founders of the Memorial Theatre had evidently foreseen that the work would extend in many directions, and had

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

made provision for this extension in the Articles of Association.

It will be well to insert here the article to which Mr. Benson referred. The objects of the Association include :—

(a) The building of a theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon to be dedicated to the memory of Shakespeare.

(b) The annual celebration in a fitting manner of Shakespeare's birthday.

(c) The advancement and improvement of the dramatic art, by the establishment and maintenance of a School of Acting, the delivery of lectures, the establishment of prizes for essays, and other means.

(d) The effecting the objects aforesaid or any of them, either alone or conjointly with any scientific, literary, or other society or institution.

A long and earnest discussion followed, and the main idea of the Conference was eventually formulated in the following words: It is proposed to hold a supplementary season in the summer, about the end of July and the beginning of August, for the benefit of the Colonial, American, and foreign visitors. At this season it is also proposed to give in the Theatre and out of doors special plays and performances of

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

a pageant nature for the benefit of associations, schools, universities, and to arrange camps for students, boy scouts, and children.

Thus began what promises to be a new epoch in the history of the Memorial Theatre and its surrounding agencies.

The time for this new development, which will carry the spirit of Shakespeare and all that is involved in his dramas into ever wider and wider spheres, was well chosen. To those who have eyes to see and ears to hear it is abundantly evident that there is to-day an awakening throughout the length and breadth of England. It is an awakening of national consciousness and of national responsibility. It involves a race-consciousness that will overcome class prejudice, and that will unite the dwellers in all parts of the Empire in that it means a new Imperial ideal. All over the world and in all nations the cosmopolitan ideal is being realised as false except for purposes of trade, commerce, and for certain material conveniences. In art, in high politics, in its true and inner life each nation must carve its own destiny according to its own distinctive individuality and the special gifts with which it has been entrusted.

The renaissance of this individual race-

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

consciousness is to-day in England finding an outward and visible sign in a revival of folk-art in drama, dance music, and song, and in a love of nature and outdoor life. In legend and folk-tale we are relearning the age-long wisdom of the folk which has always had its roots deep in the traditions of the English people. We are beginning to distrust the generalisations gathered on the surface of the hurrying life of to-day, and we are looking deeper into the heart of England for some of those qualities without which no nation can fulfil its highest destiny.

And it is in this development of our own highest ideals that we shall learn to understand the peoples of other countries whose outward characteristics may differ widely from our own, and it is on these lines that the lasting comity of nations will eventually come about, and not by racial wars nor by a surface glozing over of national differences.

The evidences of this awakening are all around us in England to-day. In cities and in towns young men and women are spending the hours of recreation in singing the folk-songs and dancing the folk-dances evolved from the tillers of the soil, as an expression of race-consciousness in religious ceremonial no

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

less than of joy in everyday work and life. They are also acting and reciting the master-pieces of English literature with tone and gesture which would have been an impossible achievement ten or twenty years ago. Children, too, are being taught in folk-games some of the deepest lessons yet learned by the human race. That this last statement may not seem far fetched an instance may here be given.

A very favourite game is called "London Bridge." It tells of the breaking down of a great and important bridge. It tells in nonsense rhyme of different suggestions for building it again :—

"Build it up with pins and needles ;
Build it up with penny loaves ;
Build it up with gold and silver,"

until at last with apparent irrelevance come the words :—

"Here's a prisoner we have got,
My fair lady."

There is an evidently made up charge against the prisoner of having stolen a watch and chain, an offer of ransom, and a final leading of the victim to prison, on failure to find the required ransom.

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

It is well authenticated that in ancient days human sacrifices were laid at the foundation-stones of important buildings, and that in later and more humane days treasure in gold and silver was substituted for the human life.

And so in this child's game we see handed down in symbol the age-long truth that no great work can last unless founded upon the sacrifice of self, that no bridge can be built across which humanity shall walk to higher life unless underneath and at its foundation is human life and human service.

And the English country-side is also alive to-day with this rebirth of our national inheritance of folk-art. In remote villages miracle plays, pageants of history, folk-songs, and folk-dances are studied during long winter evenings to make merry the days when the sun shines and life can be lived out of doors.

In schools, eyes and hands are being trained to a new dexterity, and bare school walls are gay with the colours of the beautiful brushwork done by tiny children in infant schools. At Sompting, in Sussex, history and geography have been made living and interesting to the children by dramatising those subjects whenever possible. And not only has this awakening come to the children, but in many villages

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

to-day ploughmen and sewing-maids, workmen and workwomen, are taking part in drama and dance and song.

There are everywhere signs that the ugliness of cities has reached its limit, that the power conferred by mere money has failed, that commercialism cannot satisfy, and once more men and women are returning to the deeper and more abiding rhythm of life long ago broken by the rush and whirr of machinery. We are relearning the lesson to-day that the forces which make for evil are apt to be increased both by opposition and by cowardly acquiescence, and that they can be redeemed only by the transmuting power of beauty and of art into willing servants of the best and highest interests of the nation.

To concentrate these newly-inaugurated forces and to give them an ever widening opportunity for expression is the task which the Festival Association has set itself to do.

As a part of the summer season of 1910 at the Memorial Theatre, a Folk Festival was held in which dancers and singers from a factory in Hull, children from London, country folk from the immediate neighbourhood, and country school children took part. The Theatre was filled all day with people from all over



Photo by W. J. Kilpatrick, Dublin

THE LATE GEORGE R. WEIR AS SIR TOBY BELCH

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

England, and interested spectators from countries as far off as America and New Zealand.

The actual Folk Festival was preceded by a competition in folk dance and song, and the competitors were traditional dancers and singers from the country around Stratford, and children, young men, and young women who had learnt the songs and dances since they were revived in 1905.

During the three weeks of the Festival daily classes were held for folk-song singing, morris and country dancing, and children's singing games, especially for teachers engaged in elementary schools and physical training colleges. These classes were well attended, and the Parish Parlour where they were held became quite a meeting ground for those especially interested in the study of folk-art and its use as a factor in the education of children.

Many distinguished visitors, including His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda, came to the Parish Parlour to see the classes. On each Saturday morning, before the departure of the week's pupils to their homes all over England, a little informal talk was given by Mrs. F. R. Benson, the Rev. F. Hodgson, Mr. Benson, Mr. Flower and others, and one Saturday was memorable because the Gaekwar spoke to us

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

of the life of his people in India and the link between East and West which was being strengthened by the love of folk-art and of all that the highest drama meant to the people.

Those Saturday morning talks will live for all of us who were present as embodying the ideals for which it is hoped these visits to Stratford-upon-Avon will stand.

Excursions were arranged to places of interest in the neighbourhood, and many happy hours were spent boating on the river. There was during the whole Festival a delightful spirit of companionship and of helpfulness which promises well for the work we have so much at heart.

The performance of Josephine Preston Peabody's play, "The Piper," in the first summer season, at which were gathered so many interested in the education of the young, set that note of beauty and of joy for the children which it is hoped will always be associated with Stratford-upon-Avon.

"Out of your cage,
Come out of your cage
And take your soul on a pilgrimage!
Pease in your shoes, an if you must!
But out and away, before you're dust:
Scribe and Stay-at-home,

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

Saint and Sage,
Out of your cage,
Out of your cage ! ”

was the message which went out in 1910 at the beginning of the new venture, and it is the message which well expresses the spirit of the whole movement.

There is already established an office in Guild Street which is a central bureau of information about pageants, folk-drama, miracle plays, folk-dancing, folk-songs, and children's singing games. This office is prepared to supply information on these subjects, and, when required, to assist local initiative. The work of the office is also to keep records of all dramatic societies and their performances, and to collect information as to plays, acting versions, scenery, and dresses.

One of the objects of the movement is to facilitate and encourage dramatic representations throughout the country, especially in villages by the villagers themselves, and in schools by scholars, for purposes of education and recreation.

Greek, Latin, French, and German plays have already been produced with success at the public schools and the universities; historical episodes, masques, and pageants in

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

elementary schools and villages. The opinion of many of the teachers who have tried the experiment confirms the idea that a class of students will learn more of a subject in three hours by assisting at a play, whether as actor or audience, than in three weeks by any other method. Further, that in the school play there are not only the machinery of teaching by word and pictures any special subject, but also the means of increasing *esprit de corps*, and awakening an intellectual interest in the duller of scholars. A very poor woman was lately heard to say that the folk dances and games had "knocked more into her child's head than all the other schooling she had ever had!" There are whole scenes in history, in travels, in Herodotus, Chaucer, Froissart, Addison, Scott, Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, and others ready to hand; there are legends and myths, English and foreign, waiting on the book-shelves. There are also many plays that, from the form in which they are cast or from some peculiar requirements, are more suitable for this method of representation; many such works, capable of giving noble pleasure and stirring the imagination of actors and audience, might find in the hall and in the schoolroom a hearing denied them in the theatre.

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

The future of this whole movement lies with the English people themselves.

We have the use of an endowed Theatre, the assistance of a stock company of accomplished artists, and a School of Acting; and now we have our extended Festival, for the development of which there is also the nucleus of an endowment. As the membership of the Association grows, and as the endowment fund also grows, all that we wish to do can be accomplished.

It is to the Association which has already accomplished so much, and which has before it so hopeful a future, that we invite all those men and women of good-will who would see England a fairer and more joyful country for the coming generation.

The foundations were well laid by the founders of the work; it is for us to build the Temple of Life and of Art, and to give to it our loyal service and our best gifts.

II

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

I.—IN ENGLAND

THE revival of folk-art in song and dance, in game and drama is, in England to-day, an accomplished fact. The future development of this revival is still on the knees of the gods, but there are those who see in it unlimited possibilities of happiness and well-being for the coming generations of England.

There is also to-day a new and different interest in folk-lore, in legend, and in folk-tale, and a new comprehension of what both science and religion may learn from their study.

Sociologists finding the problems of civilisation too difficult to unravel in the complicated life of towns and cities, are studying the pre-historic life of individual and of communal man, hoping that by following the threads of progress from these olden days onward they may discover at what points divergence was made on to a mistaken road, that they may guide the future on to better lines.

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

Students of Eugenics are taking facts and premises from the simplest forms of life and processes on which to found helpful suggestions for the improvement of a race which has to adapt itself to an ever increasing complexity of environment.

Artists, too, are going back to the creations of the simple and unlettered folk that they may build on the foundations of natural taste and emotion. We are seeking in all things to penetrate deep into the heart of the folk, and so we are finding evidences of religion and of the spiritual life not in the wordy disputations of theologians, but in the appeal which the spirit makes to the deepest instincts of the race, as shown in the similarity of the beliefs of simple folk in all countries and in all times, as illustrated when the paganism of Greece was merged into the Christian religion.

It is interesting to look back some twenty years and trace the origin of this renaissance of folk-art which is so completely changing the life of England both in town and country.

We are passing on from the negation and denial of Puritan days to a Catholic acceptance of joy and of beauty as our national inheritance.

If we have learnt the lesson, which is necessary for a nation no less than for an

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

individual, that the time of death and of negation is part of the growth in life and fruitfulness, that the corn of wheat must fall into the earth and die before it can rise to golden harvest, then our Puritan ancestors will not have built in vain, and we can be trusted to reap the harvest of joy which, in tears, they sowed.

And the revival, which has its roots in the folk, is a revival of art which is not separated from life and work, therefore it is clean and virile, and is not beset with the dangers of an attenuated preciousness so often the result of an artistic renaissance. One Eastertide a working man from London, who spent long days in hard and difficult mechanical work, spent a week in the country. It was a late Easter, and the garden was a mass of spring flowers. For hours he sat taking his fill of their beauty, wanting no other amusement than just to sit and watch. And because his working days were hard and his labour honest, so his love of the beauty of earth and sky and flowers was clean and strong, and as far as possible removed from that of the pseudo-æsthete who prates of art and the artistic temperament.

Probably the first seeds of this revival amongst the people were sown in the early

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

city settlements, which were first established about twenty years ago, as a protest against conditions which gave to one class all the opportunities of enjoying the beautiful things of life. A dawning consciousness that it was true of all classes that man could not live by bread alone sent a band of men and women into the poorest districts of London to share as far as it was possible the advantages which leisure and education had given them with those who had been deprived of their birth-right of joy and beauty.

The educated classes had thrown off the iron yoke of Puritanism, but it was much later before the working-class was allowed a share in this new liberty.

The woman who encouraged her daughter to dance and sing and take an intelligent interest in drama, still considered these things wicked for her maid and her dressmaker.

But in these settlements men and women of all classes came together, and as time went on the demand of the workers for a fuller life was met by those who were ready to meet that demand, and music and dances and painting and drama were brought within reach of those who were just beginning to realise how much they meant.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

And as ever happens, those who went to give found that they were great receivers too ; what they gave of their leisure and their intellectual equipment came back to them in strength and loyalty and an insight into the deeper truths of life, unknown to those who study only books. The folk-art revival is a result of this meeting in human fellowship of all classes and of all conditions.

The revival of folk-dancing, which has been such an important landmark in the history of the folk-art revival, was taken up with enthusiasm by a club for working girls which had for its object just this sharing of the best things of life with those to whom the enjoyment of them would have been otherwise impossible. And it happened on this wise. For many years our winter's companionship had ended in a summer's holiday spent in the country and by the sea, and there we had learned to know and love the sights and sounds of the country. We became familiar with racing clouds, with the deep tidal river, and with the ever changing rhythm of the sea. It was not strange, therefore, that a little working girl said when she first heard the broken rhythm of the beautiful folk-song, "The Bold Fisherman": "Isn't it just like the sound of the little waves

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

curling over?" It is interesting to note that the same idea came to a cultivated musician who heard the song for the first time.

Florence Warren, whose name stands to many both in England and America as that of the finest exponent of English folk-dancing, first learnt to know and love the sea as she sped over the waves on a moonlight trip in a big fishing trawler, that held all the party of girls spending a holiday away from the city; and I like to think that, as a child of eleven, she began to drink in from Mother Earth some of the gaiety which has made her such a bringer of joy to both English and American children and their teachers.

Besides, from our country holiday we had learned much from song and dance and drama during the winter evenings we spent in town, and we had learnt the national Scotch dances and danced them on special occasions to the sound of the bagpipe, played by the gallant-stepping piper who had also taught the steps of the dances. And we had given our winter to Irish folk-song and Irish dances.

Circumstances had for a long time been fitting the members of this club for the joyous service to their country which has set the children of England dancing once more as

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

they danced in the days when England was merry England in reality as well as in name.

In the autumn of 1909 the first English folk-song was taught to the members of the Esperance Girls' Club, and its name, "The Seeds of Love," was symbolic of the harvest of song which stands high and golden in the land to-day.

The effect of the music was magical, and although to-day they know some hundred songs, the music still holds its charm, both for the singers and for those who come again and again to hear the songs, until one is ashamed of the days when we gave them the artificial and insincere music which was all we thought them capable of appreciating. Then some weeks afterwards we heard that there were still alive in at least one country place the old morris dances, and lute men were invited to London to teach these dances of the country-side.

And, again, the name of the first dance learnt was symbolic, and again the result was magical. In less than half-an-hour the old ceremonial dance of the spring, "Bean-setting," was being danced in a part of London where twice a week laden hay-carts bring the odours of the country right into the heart of London.

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

It is said that there is no third generation of Londoners, and one wonders sometimes, as one looks at the way in which this revival of dance and song has spread, whether there was not some response of ancestral memory in that first learning of songs and dances by these London girls.

Experience has confirmed the first impressions that these hard-working, independent, healthy, and laughter-loving daughters of the people are the natural interpreters and teachers of these folk-dances which have come from the unlettered and simple country folk.

In England there is danger that we do not recognise that which the Americans have been careful to make quite clear, that whereas the classic and the ballroom dance need careful training and technical skill, the folk-dance is a natural expression of joy and well-being, and needs no special training either in dancer or teacher. I like to hear it said, "We will show you a folk-dance," and not "We will teach you one," because this is really what the teaching should be.

Folk-art, if it is genuine, is an organic thing, and must grow and develop as the years pass by, and the dance of to-day will change to-morrow if it still expresses the genuine emotion of to-morrow.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

The revival of the love of drama and the actual taking part in it of those who at best were only lookers-on, is another hopeful sign of to-day.

The miracle play, the Church's way of teaching moral and religious truths to simple and unlettered folk, had fallen on evil days, and almost the only form in which it remained for years was the Punch and Judy show, always and for ever dear to children everywhere. How many of us remember, as we look on at the antics of the puppets, that the show once represented the drama of the betrayal of our Lord by Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate? And now in many towns and villages truth and beauty are being held up for worship, and treachery and lying shown in all their ugliness by plays written for and acted by the people themselves.

Ten years ago it would have been difficult to find a village where a play could be seen, still less one in which the villagers took part. Not many years hence every village will have its play, with its own stock company composed of those who follow the plough, shoe the horses, make the butter, and follow all the ordinary occupations.

In Boxford in Berkshire there has been given for eight consecutive years a masque in

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

which the children of the village take their part. One year the play represented the personification of the rivers and streams of the county. The play was given in a woodland theatre, and the children, as gnats and dragon-flies, darted in and out, or as trees and tiny streams played their parts as only children can.

As the years have passed this play has become the centre of the village life, from which radiate many forces which make for a better and a happier social life.

In another village in Somerset there is given on SS. Innocents' Day a play which tells the story of Bethlehem and the tidings of great joy brought by the angels to the shepherds as they watched. The parts are taken by the shepherds and tillers of the soil who live in the village, and it is under the direction of the parish priest, who leaves the dialogue mostly to the people who act the play, only reserving to himself the rights of censor should the dialogue become too local and too personal for the peace of mind of the audience!

These are only two plays out of very many, and inquiry can be made at the office of the Festival Association at Stratford-upon-Avon for a list of plays at present being performed.

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

What has been the effect of this revival of folk-art in the present generation? This is a question one is often asked by those who are still a little afraid of happiness and who do not quite believe that

“The good are always the merry
Save by an evil chance.”

It has meant, and will, I think, always mean, a greater patriotism and love of one's country and a closer knitting together of class and class.

It means the recovery of a lost happiness and beauty and a strengthening of moral fibre, and it means more physical well-being.

It means gentler manners and a greater courtesy, and a joy of living that will make English boys and girls what every lover of our country would have them, upstanding, clean living, and joyous.

II.—THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART AND THE DRAMA IN THE UNITED STATES

The revival of folk-dance, folk-song, and folk-games is already one of the features of education in America.

Especially delightful is the fact that the

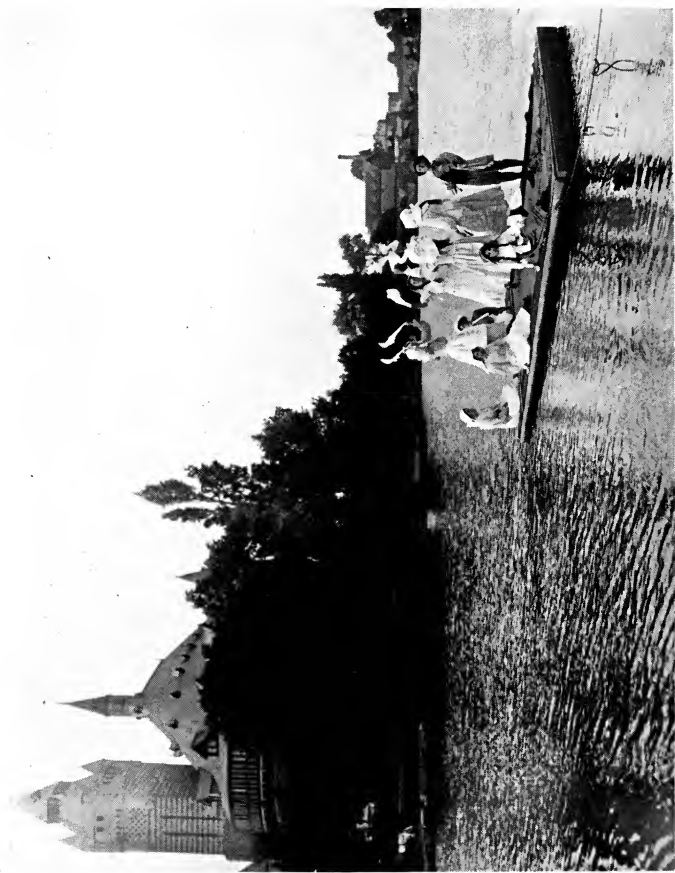


Photo by Central News Agency

MORRIS DANCERS AT STRATEFORD, JUPON-AVON

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

Societies which exist for organising the play-time of the city children are using folk-dances and games, recognising that these are the natural outlet for the joy of life, always the inheritance of children, however sordid and miserable their material circumstances may be.

The interesting feature of the revival in America is that, as there are living there the folk of every nation under the sun, the teachers do not teach the English dramas and games, but have made a study of those of the many nations represented by the children in their schools.

The experiment in America is therefore unique, and will be watched by all those interested in the subject of folk-art. Perhaps in the future a new school of music and dance will arise, founded on this accumulated knowledge of the folk-music of all nations.

I have been attending every kind of play during the past three months' stay in the United States. I have gone from Maeterlinck at the New Theatre, to Miver's Music Hall in the Bowery, and have a very definite idea of the strength and of the weakness of the presentations I have seen. In the first place, I have never seen anything so beautiful as the

THE SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

setting, lighting, stage effects, and dressing of every play I have seen, and of all the beautiful effects the scenes in "Sister Beatrice" at the New Theatre were beyond all words most beautiful. No criticism is possible, for there was not only richness and superb colouring, but also a wonderful restraint throughout.

I saw another symbolic play besides "Sister Beatrice," and that was "The Scarecrow," by Percy Mackaye, and the acting in these two plays was beyond criticism, for the real things which they symbolised belong to no age and to no nation. The struggle between earthly love and the spiritual life, and the final realisation that when the love is high and true there is no antagonism, belongs to all men; the birth of an evil through love, even when the soul dwells in a pitifully grotesque exterior, is not a new story, and can be interpreted as well by an American as by a Frenchman or an Englishman. But it is when it comes to the interpretation of modern English drama, or of a drama which is English as Shakespeare is English, that the first difficulty comes in.

I do not think it possible for Shakespeare to be played convincingly by any man or woman who has not lived and studied in England, and under some one who is saturated with all the

THE REVIVAL OF FOLK-ART

best traditions of the English stage. I have come back more than ever convinced that the Stock Company and School of Acting which we already have, which it is hoped will be much enlarged and strengthened in the near future, is as much a necessity for the serious dramatic artists of America as it is for those of England. Some amalgamation could surely be arranged by which American dramatic students could study in England and be attached to the School of Acting at Stratford-upon-Avon.

The New Theatre in New York is a standing proof of the lavish generosity of Americans, and of their patriotic desire that their country shall have the best its sons and daughters can give her. A step further and the establishment of a co-operation with England in the training of its artists, and America would have the finest dramatic productions of the world.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

HOW TO TAKE PART IN THE MOVEMENT AT STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

HAVING read the foregoing chapters the reader will have some idea of what is taking place and about to take place in Stratford-upon-Avon. And the question may be asked, "How may I take part in so valuable a movement?"

1. By writing to the Secretary of the Festival Association and making further inquiry as to how to get into touch with the various developments.

2. By coming either alone or with a party of friends, to either the Birthday Festival in the Spring or the Shakespeare Season in the Summer. No better idea can be formed of the work than by living in the atmosphere of Stratford-upon-Avon for a few days and taking part in the revels.

3. If actual work is impossible one can become a subscriber. Subscribers of a minimum of 5s. annually become Associates; donors of a minimum of £5 become Life Associates of the Festival Association. Donors of a minimum of £100 are eligible for election as Governors of the Memorial Theatre.

Or, one may help—

(i.) By encouraging Morris Dancing among the villages and cities. By forming classes for teachers. By sending

APPENDIX

teams to the annual Folk Festival held in July at Stratford-upon-Avon.

(ii.) By encouraging in the same way Folk Singing in the villages and towns.

(iii.) By writing small dramatic scenes or plays and getting them performed in local centres, and perhaps bringing performers to the Folk Festival to act such village plays; to make centres so that the neighbouring villages can obtain information about performing a play, making or hiring costumes and scenery, with the thousand and one details of a small production, such centres always to be in touch with the general centre at the Festival Association in Stratford-upon-Avon.

(iv.) When more important dramatic work is undertaken to arrange with the Central Office at Stratford-upon-Avon for books of the plays and for the hire of costumes and scenery at a reasonable cost. (Many helpers are needed to prepare prompt-books and undertake to copy from manuscript, to colour photographs, to write out descriptions of costumes, &c.)

Inquiries concerning Theatre Tickets, Apartments, Lodgings, &c., to be addressed to Miss A. Rainbow, Box Office, Memorial Lecture Room, Stratford-upon-Avon. Telephone 45.

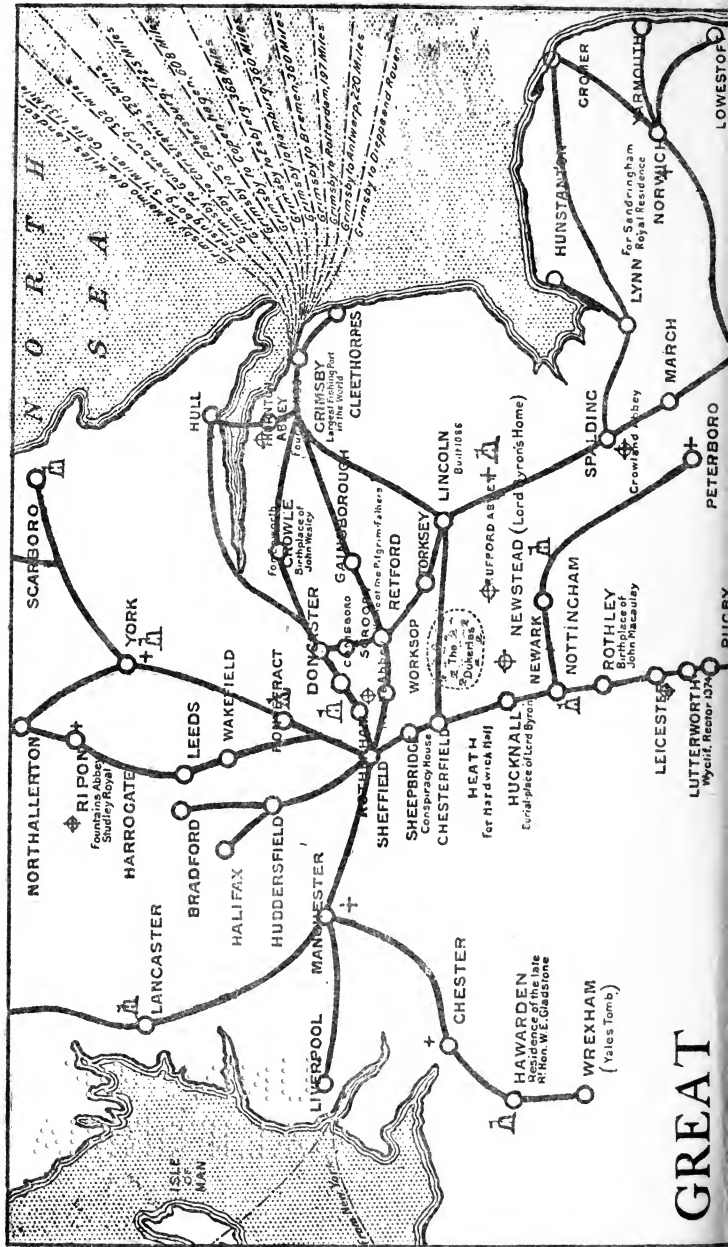
ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

All Teachers and *bonâ fide* Students are granted special privileges for the Summer Season. Full particulars can be obtained from the Secretary, Festival Association, Stratford-upon-Avon.

THE shortest and quickest route to the Home of Shakespeare from London and a number of Provincial Towns in the Midlands and the North of England is by the Great Central Railway. The traveller from London is able to journey from Marylebone by express trains in just over two hours to Stratford-on-Avon. During the season these run four days a week, viz. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and return to town by an equally quick train, for the modest fare of 6/6 for the day, and 4/6 half-day. The inclusive fare of 12/6 provides rail journey from London (Marylebone) to Stratford-on-Avon and back, conveyance from Station to Hotel, luncheon at "Golden Lion" Hotel, circular drive to places of interest in Stratford-on-Avon and Shottery, afternoon tea at Hotel. The circular rail and motor tour fare of 11/6 includes rail journey from London (Marylebone) to Stratford-on-Avon and back, and a tour by motor to Anne Hathaway's cottage, Shottery, Warwick Castle, Guy's Cliffe, Kenilworth Castle, Leamington, and back to Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon. Particulars of these facilities are obtainable at Marylebone Station, any G.C.R. Town Office or Agency, or by post from the Company's Publicity Bureau, 216 Marylebone Road, London, N.W.

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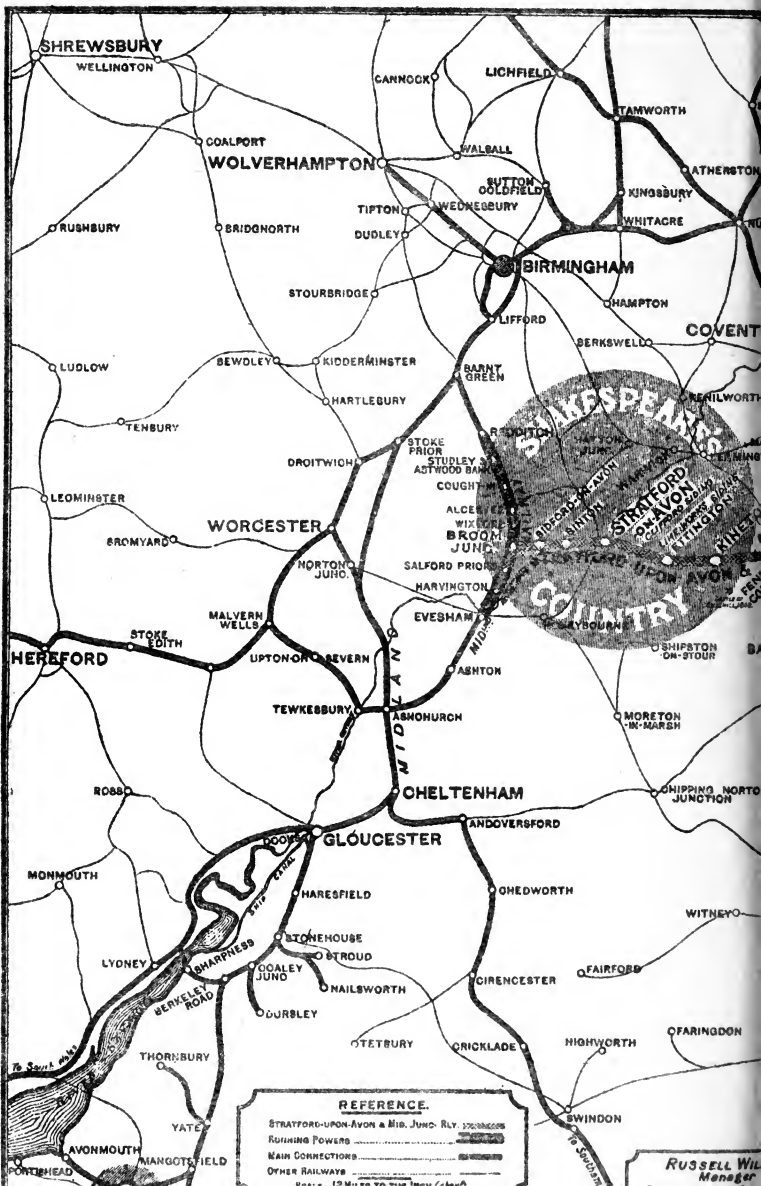
THE quickest and shortest route between London and Stratford-on-Avon for Shakespeare's country is by "The Shakespeare Route" on the Stratford-upon-Avon and Midland Junction Railway.

This newly-organised and important Railway links up three Great Trunk Lines of England (Great Central, Midland, and London & North-Western Railway), and is thus enabled to give the best and most expeditious service from

ALL PARTS TO STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

For full particulars of Train Service and all information apply to RUSSELL WILLMOTT, Manager, Stratford-on-Avon.

"SHAKE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON A

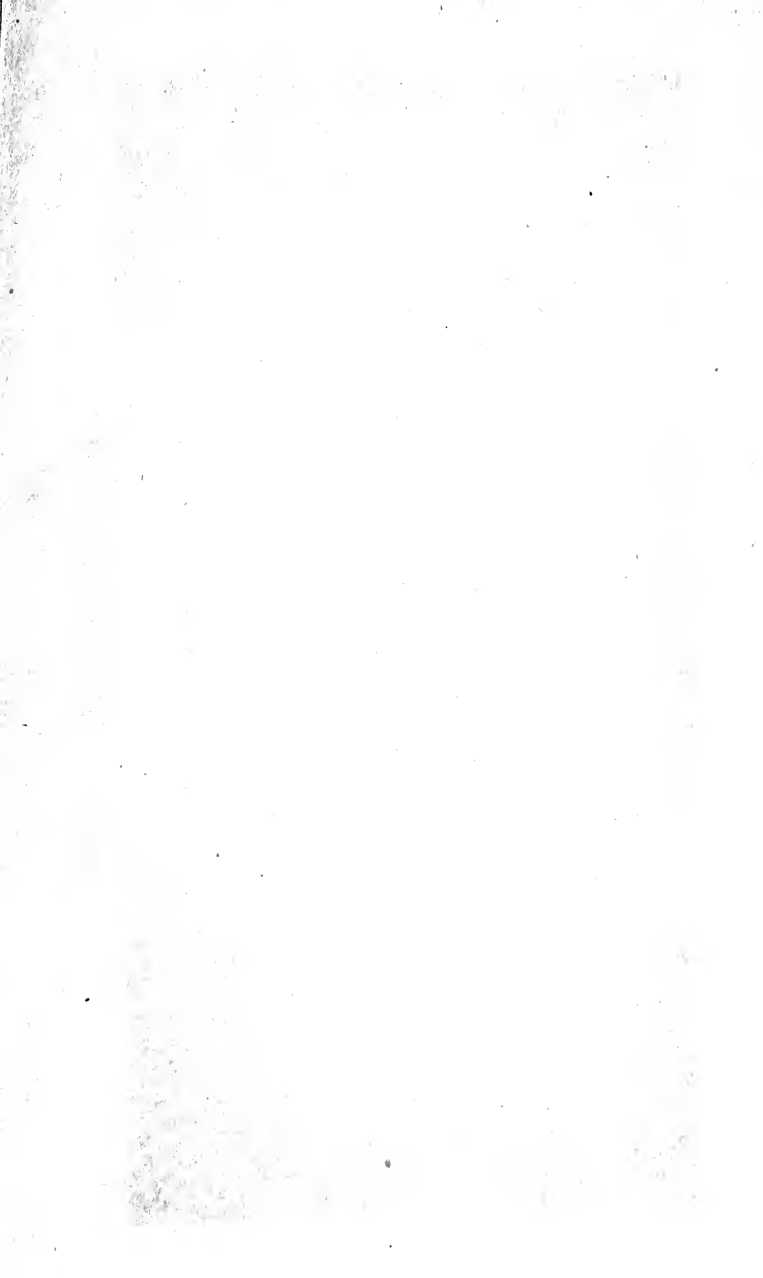


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